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To the Editors

I was wrong, so thanks

As a nonpracticing Duluthian currently alive in East Harlem, I was delighted to read Ann O'Brien Treacy's "Time Stops" [The Last Word, April 19]. Her report of keeping company with the eucharistic Christ in Father Patrick McDowell's oasis of prayer was evidence that I, too, was incorrect to suspect that initial interest in such a prayerful undertaking would eventually wane. I'm happy that my brother priest was right, I was wrong, and Treacy was articulate and sensitive in telling the tale of silent hours, attention to God, and the many advantages of prayerfulness.

REV. WILLIAM C. GRAHAM
New York, N.Y.

All is not lost

David R. Carlin, Jr.'s, counsel of despair, "Face It, We've Lost" [column, May 17], ignores many signs in our culture that point in the direction opposite to his conclusions. Consider these points:

1. Twenty-three years after *Roe* v. *Wade*, the surprise is that abortion on demand is not simply accepted overwhelmingly by a populace influenced by a media world that has been at pains to present the choice of abortion—even for the most trivial of reasons—as a fundamental human right. But for a presidential veto, a bill with strong bipartisan support banning partial birth abortions would now be the law of the land. For the most part, it has been religiously motivated people who have kept up the pressure, even at the expense of a great deal of mockery or indifference, and Catholics are hardly alone in taking a prolife stand. We have not prevailed, but, in contrast to Carlin's defeatist view, we are not simply out of the loop, consigned to the margins.

2. Physician-assisted suicide is also clearly an issue on which the public is sharply divided; propositions in its favor were defeated in Washington and California and barely squeaked through in Oregon. Religiously motivated people are again at the forefront of this struggle, and—Carlin to the contrary notwithstanding—the fight is far from over.

3. On same-sex marriage: Various state legislatures are already taking action to void the effects in their states of a law legitimating such unions in the state of Hawaii. These initiatives reflect the state of public opinion; polls clearly demonstrate that same-sex marriage is not something most Americans, including most citizens of Hawaii, favor. Again, religiously motivated people are not on the sidelines but in the midst of this debate. Perhaps to strengthen his overall thesis, your columnist ignores all this; he seems ready to proclaim defeat before the first skirmish is over.

4. In recent years, quiet but audible doubts have been expressed about the practice of easy divorce in this country; discussion of the value of the intact family—mother, father, and children—is even more in evidence.

5. It is impossible to imagine any party taking power in the United States with the kind of specifically antireligious and anticlerical programs espoused by parties that took office in several European states during the last century and the first three decades of this one. Can Carlin imagine any presidential candidate today running successfully on a platform of hostility to Christianity (or Judaism, or Islam) and of approval for abortion on demand, physician-assisted suicide, same-sex marriages, and the interests of the entertainment industry as it is?

6. The reception given to Pope John Paul II and his message in this country last October argues in favor of an openness on the part of Americans to the highest ideals, even if not always an acceptance and practice of those ideals. Indeed, the recognition of the worldwide impact of the papacy's moral leadership has been a positive sign of the times.

Finally, Carlin seems overly impressed with the havoc that can be wreaked by courts in our society. As great as that can be at times—and as great as the benefits of court decisions in other instances—the courts do not ultimately determine the morals of society. The *Dred Scott* decision did not deter those who knew slavery was wrong, nor did the precedent of *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* stop those who knew that "separate but equal" was a cover for repression. What would our society be like today if, in the face of either of these decisions, those with a higher moral vision had declared, "Face it, we've lost"? I can only hope that Carlin is using a form of Swiftian satire, rather than actually contending that Christianity is a spent force in our culture.

MSGR. FRANCIS J. MANISCALCO
Washington, D.C.

Carlin misreads politics

David R. Carlin, Jr.'s April 19 column ["Why Clinton Will Lose"] errs in its reading of political trends. It's true that the Democrats have paid a price for their attempt at the politics of inclusion: The "have-nots" have definitely alienated the "haves." But this is partly the result of a Republican strategy to portray the progress made by blacks and women as "undeserved" and made "at the expense" of some other group.

Again, Carlin is correct that unions can no longer deliver votes. But I would suggest that their power has been waning because "right-to-work" laws, striker-replacement laws, and court decisions that have weakened or negated collective bargaining agreements have deprived unions of the one thing they could offer their members—job security.

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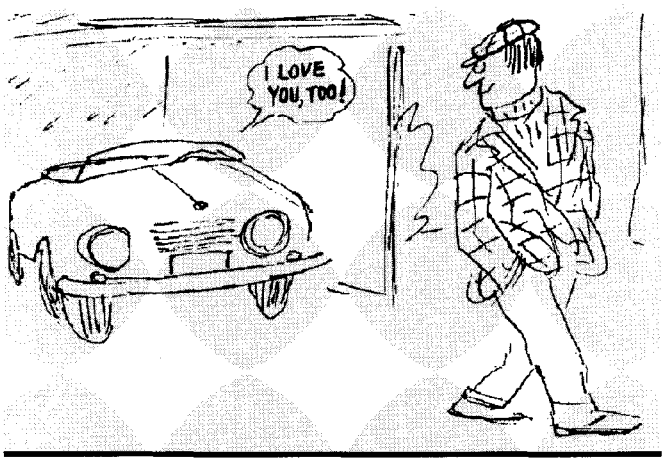

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Finally, I question Carlin's thesis that the 1994 midterm election represented a significant change in electoral patterns. I think the results of that election reflected the widespread perception among voters that government just wasn't working and the Congress was the captive of big money. So they decided to give the Republicans a chance. The Republicans have made the mistake of thinking that the electorate endorsed the Contract with America lock, stock, and barrel.

I don't know whether we want "big" government or "small" government, but I firmly believe we want government to work. The only thing as bad as a big government that doesn't work is a small government that doesn't work. What the Republicans are showing us so far is that their definition of small government entails passing the buck of reponsibility downward. I'm not sure that's what Americans want.

MIKE FARENELL
Glens Falls, N.Y.

All politics is regional

David Carlin's arguments in his essay on President Clinton's bid for re-election ignore the central premise of presidential election politics: It is essentially regional in character. This was the strength of Carter's successful run in 1976 and Clinton's in 1992. They were both Southerners, and this enabled them to break up the Republican coalition first envisioned in Barry Goldwater's candidacy in 1964, then used successfully in 1968 by Richard Nixon.

It wasn't simply a "Southern strategy"; rather, it recognized the inordinate strength presidential elections give to smaller states, and the simple fact that there are many more smaller states than larger states.

Putting it all together, the strategy capitalized on how rules of presidential elections can magnify even small population losses in the large Northern states into sizable Electoral College pluralities from the smaller states. By 1988 the GOP had a coalition big enough to win a presidential election without having to campaign in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and California; it could literally concede those large states to the Democrats (never set foot in them, spend no money on campaign advertising) and still win the White House—always provided that the Democrats did nothing to try to break up this plurality of primarily small (or previously small) states from the Intermountain West, the High Plains, and the Old Confederacy. Though the Republicans also needed Alaska, Michigan, Indiana, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Maine to cobble out their victories, the main strength was literally through the heart of the nation.

In 1988, the Democrats dutifully obliged, settling on Michael Dukakis as their nominee. George Bush dressed him in suitably stereotypical images, and the voting public responded accordingly. But in 1992, Clinton and Gore fractured the bloc. True, Arkansas and Tennessee weren't much, but they were a start. Add the economic strains in Louisiana and the demographic shifts that actually caused population losses in Montana and Wyoming, and the GOP faced a new line-up in the Electoral College.

Carlin is right to dismiss the value of early polls that forecast a Clinton victory in November 1996. But he's not entirely right to call him an underdog. In the current climate, just about any candidate is an underdog.

CHARLES SAYDAH
Monsey, N.Y.

You're not funny

I resented the smug and flippant tone of the editorial ["Catholicism," May 3] cheerfully defending your old buddy, the Rev. Richard McBrien; it was a clear example of the old boys' network in operation.

You blithely dismiss the bill of particulars drawn up by the Doctrine Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops against this man's book, *Catholicism*. Of course, you were cowardly enough to drag in the Vatican and the conservatives ("No doubt, Rome threatened, American conservatives complained"). "Such is life in contemporary Catholicism," you sigh.

But this is no laughing matter, and I would expect *Commonweal* to take it seriously. The Doctrine Committee is not a bridge club or a sewing circle. Address the issue. Don't get into the game of name-calling, making fun, or searching for motives on the part of those mysterious dark forces of obscurantism out there somewhere.

GINO DALPIAZ, C.S.
Stone Park, Ill.

Thanks, plus a demurral

Thank you very much for your editorial of May 3 on my recent trouble with the bishops. I especially like your last two sentences.

If I have any complaint about the editorial, it is with its assertion that the preface to the new edition of *Catholicism* suggests that the bishops and I are "now of one mind." The preface makes no such suggestion. The use of the words "essentially sympathetic" in the preface was intended as a way of returning the compliment to the committee, whose chairman, Archbishop John Quinn, had described the process followed in

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Gaseous fumes

The jockeying in Washington over lowering the 1993 surtax on transportation fuel has been a high-octane exercise in election-year politics. If there had been a tax on rhetoric, the treasury coffers would have run over. Instead, an opportunity was lost to examine not only tax policy but the vital transportation and environmental needs of the nation.

The 4.3 cent per-gallon gas tax levied in 1993 had a laudable goal: deficit reduction. Arguably, however, the aim of a gasoline tax ought to have been more closely linked to national transportation needs and repair of the environmental damage involved in meeting those needs, rather than to replenishing the general fund. Still, even a more direct rationale might not have salvaged the 1993 tax, given this election-year's volatile combination of antitax sentiment and rising fuel costs.

The political pandering, however, was noxious. Republicans sought to lift the tax only after prices had already spiked at 20 cents a gallon. Clearly, the culprit of the price increase was not the 1993 tax (even including the 4.3-cent levy, the U.S. has the lowest gasoline taxes in the world, averaging 34 cents per gallon, compared to $3.22 in some European countries), but something closer to home: supply and demand. Fuel prices in the U.S. have remained relatively stable for the past decade, but shot up when supply dropped following a cold winter, the introduction of new storage and production practices, and heightened demand. The latter ballooned because Americans are driving more and using less energy-efficient vehicles. Last year, for example, we averaged 7,900 miles per vehicle, compared to 5,350 in 1973. And fuel efficiency—which had increased dramatically in the 1970s and '80s—has now reversed itself: In 1985, U.S. vehicles averaged 20.2 miles per gallon; last year the average was down to 19.3, the result of a market shift away from smaller vehicles to larger gas guzzlers. With the demise of the 55-miles-an-hour speed limit, fuel efficiency will continue to plummet (it takes 50 percent more fuel to go 75 miles per hour than 55).

But if Republicans appealed to short-term election gimmicks (the repeal was scheduled to last only until January), Democrats failed to make an argument either for tax policy in general or for a needed fuel levy. Their lack of resolve may cost the country more in the long run. For oil production in the U.S. peaked at 9 million barrels a day in 1985 and has now slipped to 7 million. And whereas we imported 3.2 million barrels a day in 1985, that figure has now jumped to 6.9 million barrels, nearly equal to our *total* domestic production. Since domestic production relative to need will continue to fall (we have 2.6 percent of known world oil reserves compared to 66 percent in the Middle East), America can count on future shortages and erratic price fluctuations.

Thus, the need to conserve is imperative, certainly for ecological reasons, but also for economic and geopolitical ones. Taxation is traditionally one of the most efficient means to curtail the use of a limited resource. To make such an argument for a fuel tax would have taken raw political courage, a scarce commodity in an election year. But the task of leadership is to point out unwelcome eventualities and thus to engineer a change in course. Instead, Washington has so far given us only hot air and indirection.

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JOHN GARVEY

A TYPOLOGY OF CONVERTS

Beware of those who are running away

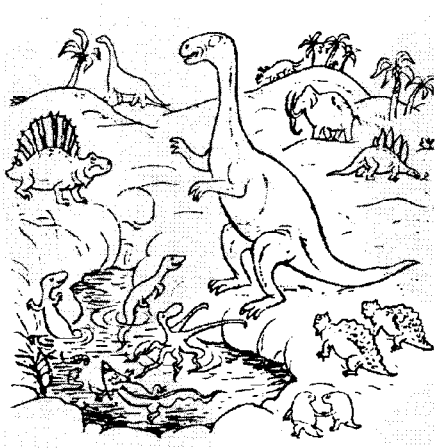
When I joined the Orthodox church twelve years ago I made a decision that I had been circling for twenty-one years. It became necessary because I realized that my only reason for remaining a Catholic was what other people might think if I became Orthodox; at that point it was no longer really a choice. I believed in Orthodoxy, worshiped as often as I could in Orthodox churches, and remaining Catholic wasn't morally possible.

At the same time, I dreaded becoming a convert. Let me explain what I mean: I had known people who converted to Catholicism whose version of Catholicism made Torquemada look laid back. It didn't feel at all like the healthy, lived-in sort of Catholicism I grew up with. There was an enthusiasm about many converts which I distrusted. I took some consolation in the fact that it had taken me so long to move toward Orthodoxy—maybe this would protect me. I had become aware of Orthodoxy's many institutional problems, and, despite my disagreement with Catholic ecclesiology, I was aware of Catholicism's many strengths. But there was no ambivalence in the mentality of some converts, no sense of grey. It was so "either/or"-ish. That wasn't me.

Six years after I became Orthodox I went to seminary, and was later ordained a priest. This has given me plenty of time to know converts to Orthodoxy and a modest ability to generalize about them, with at least a little authority. My hunch is that what I have seen applies to converts to any religion (or, for that matter, any deeply held system of belief, political or philosophical).

Half of the Orthodox seminarians I met came from non-Orthodox backgrounds, and the range was surprising. Several were from evangelical or fundamentalist backgrounds; a few came from Catholic homes; there were a couple of Jews, and one Unitarian; there were some former Anglicans, and one of my classmates spent most of the year before becoming Orthodox in a Buddhist monastery. Later on I was to meet a number of converts in parishes, and I saw in all of them—seminarians and parishioners alike—a couple of patterns.

One is that in most converts there is a profound sense of gratitude: after years of searching they have found a place that seems right; they have experienced a kind of homecoming. That sense of "a place that seems right" can be found in almost all converts, but in a significant number it does not involve gratitude so much as a form of fleeing, a refuge, a need for the feeling of certainty which is arguably neurotic. It is one thing to sing, as the church does at the end of the liturgy, "We have seen the true Light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true Faith, worshiping the undivided Trinity, who has saved us." It is another thing to add, "And the true faith means only what I say it means, and any questions about this, or disagreements with me, are heretical."



"Very well then, hands up all those who propose to become birds."

There are certainly non-negotiable Christian teachings. An Orthodox who proposes a unitarian theology, or denies Christ's eucharistic presence, is not an Orthodox. But no one seems to be arguing about these things. I have, however, seen nearly hysterical fury directed at bishops who dare to say that the fact that Orthodoxy ordains only men to the priesthood should not be seen as a subject closed to discussion, or at those priests who use "you" rather than "thee" when addressing God in liturgical prayer.

The problem here is that some people do not convert to a belief so much as they convert away from another. There is a certain sort of Catholic who, by becoming Orthodox, has joined the church that did not go through what is often called "the chaos" following Vatican II. They are sometimes disappointed when they meet bishops who are not as authoritarian as they think bishops should be, and they are especially upset at any notion that Orthodox liturgy might undergo any change of any sort in any way. There is a certain sort of Episcopalian who in joining Orthodoxy joins the church that does not ordain women, and the idea that the subject might be discussed leaves them furious, as if the thought alone meant a betrayal of Orthodoxy.

Given the state of many churches these days, I can understand some of what worries these people. Referring to God as "Father-Mother" sounds and should sound weird to anyone with ears to hear, and I have been to some Catholic liturgies that were downright awful. (I have also been to some Orthodox liturgies that were, from an aesthetic point of view, pretty dreadful.) A great many of the people who defend the ordination of women do so for reasons that have more to do with cultural politics than with the deepest needs of the church. A lot of the people in America's mainstream churches buy into a primarily secular approach to every moral and ethical question (and the Orthodox are not immune from this).

At the same time, if we believe that

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Christ has overcome death itself, what do we have to fear? Almost any question can be approached with clarity, and all can be approached with charity. Where the church's tradition is plainly against the drift of the culture, it must be firm, but it also owes the culture an explanation, and this must be offered with compassion. The need to be right which fuels so much argument has nothing to do with a genuine love for the truth, but rather with the protection of the ego.

My approach to this has been to tell any potential convert to take some time, to hang around the church for a year or so, seeing what it is like to be Orthodox, and finally to make sure it is Orthodoxy they are coming *to*, and not something else they are fleeing *from*. Baron von Hügel told an Anglican niece who wanted to become Catholic that she should learn the strengths of Anglicanism, and not become Catholic until it would be clearly a sin for her to remain in her own tradition, until it was completely necessary for her to convert. This seems about right. People who move from one tradition to another for negative reasons bring all those negative reasons with them.

A few weeks ago I was talking with a priest friend about the times when you have to bend liturgical rules a little to accommodate people pastorally. "I think we'll be OK on judgment day," he said, "as long as God isn't an Orthodox convert." □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

BY THE SWEAT OF KIDS' BROWS

Using market power to end child labor

You will read this in the week of the "Stand for Children" demonstration here in Washington. It seems an appropriate time to revisit the subject of my column of last September subtitled "Let's End Child Labor" (September 22, 1995). I thought then that we could if we tried.

In that column I wrote of a coalition, funded in part by German organizations and supported by German consumers, that has had a significant effect on one of the most ancient forms of child labor—the manufacture of hand-knotted carpets—now a worldwide industry blighting the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. As a result of this German effort it could be said that for the first time ever consumers could choose hand-knotted carpets made without child labor.

These carpets are made under the Rugmark label in India. In addition to freeing the children, the Rugmark effort uses a surcharge of 1 percent of the carpet value for a Unicef-administered program to educate and rehabilitate former child workers. The Rugmark effort avoided the one great drawback of the boycott as a weapon: that it often resulted in the shutting down of factories on which, bad as they were, the poor depended for their livelihood. The U. S. Child Labor Coalition and the National Consumer's League appealed for support for the program, asking that we do whatever we can to induce American retailers to stock Rugmark carpets. Surely consumers who cared would find the surcharge insignificant.

Apparently not. In February an article in *The Catholic Spirit*, archdiocesan paper of Saint Paul, Minnesota, quoted the Child Labor Coalition as saying that, although more than 50,000 Rugmark rugs have been exported to Germany, no retailer in this country has agreed to market a single Rugmark carpet. To say the least, this is embarrassing. Have we lost our social conscience? Or, as was suggested in the earlier column, have we lost confidence in our ability to effect social change?

If this is true of the majority of us, we can take heart and example from the struggles of a significant few. The same article tells of the work of the Women's Network of Saint Paul on behalf of Rugmark. Caroline Larsen, one of the organizers, tells of passing out information leaflets during a downpour outside Pier 1 Imports last spring and of staffing an information booth at the Minnesota State Fair. As the information became available, religious organizations, women's and children's groups, and retirees joined them. Eventually an estimated 1,000 Minnesotans signed petitions asking for the option of buying Rugmark carpets. A start at least.

In the April *Harper's Bazaar*, in an article titled "Children of a Lesser God," we read of a Reebok Human Rights Award given to twelve-year-old Igbal Masih who, as a mere child, helped lead a revolt against the abuses of child labor in Pakistan. As the writer put it, Igbal put a human face on the suffering of children worldwide. He was made to work at a loom in a carpet factory when he was only four. He worked twelve hours a day, sometimes more, with a half-hour break for lunch. The conditions under which he worked are described in hair-raising but matter-of-fact detail in an interview with *Bazaar* writer Trudie Styler.

TRUDIE STYLER: What happened if you were sick?

IGBAL MASIH: Even sick children were not allowed to rest. The owners would bring a sick child forcibly to work, and if he didn't work they would lock him in a room. They also hung children upside down until they became sicker.

TS: Did that happen to you?

IM: It happened so many times I can't count.

TS: What other punishments happened at the factory?

IM: Children were beaten. They were kept hungry. Sometimes they were fined. If a child tried to escape, he was threatened with being thrown in boiling oil.

Igbal, who must have had unusual spirit, tried to escape and to report the abuses only to be returned by the police to the factory owner, beaten, and chained to his loom. Nevertheless, at the age of ten, he attended a meeting of the Bonded Labor Liberation Front (BLLF) and

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learned that his bondage was illegal. He obtained a "certificate of freedom," attended a BLLF school, and began the fight to free other children.

Igbal was very brave. When he was in the United States to receive the award he would often say when interviewed, "I used to be afraid of the carpet masters. Now they are afraid of me." Tragically Igbal met his death just a few months after his visit to this country. He was shot while riding a bicycle with two other boys in a village near his home. The murder investigation is suspect. Fifty governments and human rights organizations, as reported in *Bazaar*, criticized it as tainted, inept, and corrupt. It is feared that "the carpet masters" got Igbal in the end.

He has, however, left a legacy. The very fact that *Harper's Bazaar* whose audience is made up of patrons of designers in the garment trade—among the first employers of child labor abroad—would publish such an indictment as "Children of a Lesser God" is stunning evidence of that. The mobilization against child labor is growing, if slowly. "It is the American consumers with one-quarter of the world's purchasing power, who hold the ultimate leverage."

The most hopeful sign is that young people are rallying to the cause. This winter I heard Anne Nicholson, a student at the College of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul, tell about the discovery she and a few of her friends made about the involvement of one of their favorite stores, the Gap, with the abuse of teen-age women workers in El Salvador. The clothing they liked was being put together in a "sweat-shop" there—called a *maquiladora*. It was managed by Taiwanese but financed by Gap contracts. Girls there were working twelve hours a day, sometimes overnight, with few if any breaks, for fifty-six cents an hour. Anne and her friends, shocked, formed a group called the Closet Activists. They set up an information table at the college, showed videos, and staged a mock fashion show demonstrating the Gap's relationship to the *maquiladoras*. The response was a passionate letter campaign from fellow students and students in other schools.

Unfortunately the law of unintended consequences set in. The Gap announced that it would sever its ties to the plant in El Salvador. The plant shut down, leaving the people without any employment at all in conditions of desperate poverty. The protesting students and their allies launched another campaign. The Gap responded that it would reopen its relationship with the plant and agreed to allow independent monitoring of labor conditions there. The National Labor Committee hopes that this is the opening that will lead to monitoring of all third-world suppliers to American designers and retailers.

Little by little the effort to end child labor and its abuse grows, not as fast as we might hope, but the movement is there, needing our attention and our help. □

Kevin Kelly

A MINIMAL GESTURE

The politics of wage hikes

To read the news recently, you'd have thought raising the minimum wage was the most important economic issue facing the country. Official Washington took all the energy Republican presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan had generated around falling wages and rising income inequality and focused it on a debate about boosting the nation's baseline wage rate from $4.25 an hour to $5.15 over the next two years.

The debate was an unfortunate sideshow that crowded out far more substantive economic issues. For boosting the minimum wage will impact only the tiniest portion (2.5 percent) of the U.S. work force. Meanwhile, as politicians dickered, overall wages remained stagnant, the income gap widened, Americans continued to worry about being downsized, and Wall Street and corporations gave them little reason not to fret. Except for a few commentators like Peter G. Peterson (*see*, *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1996), the Social Security bogey and concerns about whopping federal deficits—both of which could cripple the economy early in the next century—have nearly disappeared from the political radar screen.

Instead, we were left trying to parse a dizzying array of studies which conclude alternately that a minimum-wage increase would be the best thing since manna, or that it would precipitate the worst economic train wreck since the Depression. The heated rhetoric leapt from the op-ed pages, but real economic analysis of the proposed 90-cent increase was rare indeed.

Let's say this: The world as we know it won't end because Congress hikes the minimum wage. But neither will poverty. And the phantoms the country hoped to avoid by concentrating on the issue will reemerge, despite the best efforts to deny their existence.

Certainly a case can be made that minimum-wage workers deserve a raise. Between 1978 and today, the purchasing power of the minimum wage declined 31 percent. In fact, to have the same purchasing power it had in the 1970s, the minimum would have to jump to $5.42—an increase no one was close to proposing. An Urban Institute study argued that boosting the minimum wage would shove at least 200,000 families above the poverty line. That's because people making $8,840 a year would suddenly be bringing home $10,712.

Sounds good. Unfortunately the economic case isn't that straightforward. For when you increase wages, employers will find some way to reduce the impact on their profits by getting rid of some workers. Before the debate, the Federal Reserve Board estimated that a ninety-cent increase would reduce overall employment by 400,000 jobs, and that about

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half of those who lost their jobs would not find new ones. As Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan told Congress, "I think the evidence is persuasive" that increasing the minimum begets rising unemployment.

But what about all those studies that claim otherwise? If the Democrats have a Laffer Curve—that silly 1980s Republican economic theory sketched out on a cocktail napkin that postulated tax cuts actually increase federal revenues—it's studies that claim boosting the wage floor will *increase* employment. "That's not plausible," says Stanford University economist (and Democrat) Paul Krugman. "Demand curves don't slope that way." But many supporters of the minimum-wage increase don't seem to mind believing they do. The study they most like to trot out is one by Princeton University economist David Card. He claims that when New Jersey increased its minimum wage in 1992—from $4.25 an hour to $5.05—employment in the fast-food industry actually rose slightly for teen-agers and no job loss occurred.

Mention this study among serious economists of both the left and right and the hooting begins. Few, if any, accept its findings. Card himself has never offered a plausible explanation. Instead, it is vastly more likely that at least some of the working poor will find themselves on the street after an increase. Economist David Neumark of Michigan State University, for instance, has found that total employment consistently dropped by 1 percent to 2 percent for every 10-percent rise in the minimum.

Those who oppose the increase point out real issues. Unfortunately, politically, the opposition is being directed by the likes of Congressman Dick Armey (R-Tex.), a man who has rarely tried to do anything helpful for the poor. In fact, the very House Republicans who wanted to block an increase in the minimum spent most of last year trying to gut one of the few antipoverty programs that really works—the earned-income tax credit that protects the income of the working poor from taxation.

It's no wonder well-meaning people everywhere distrust the notion that there's a tradeoff for raising the minimum. The issue has been politicized by both sides. Democrats claimed that opposition to the increase was yet another proof that a hard heart lies at the core of the Republican revolution, and the GOP pointed to Democratic support for the raise as yet another sign of the Democrats' failure to understand market economics. Both sides spoke some truth.

But both sides would have rather called each other names over this small issue than grapple with the larger ones. In the end, they should have passed the increase and gotten on with it. The economy can create 400,000 new jobs in a good month, and putting more money in the pockets of people who work hard for a living can't be all bad. But it may be that the saddest commentary on 1990s-America is that increasing the minimum wage is what now passes for an anti-poverty program. □

Kevin Kelly, *a former reporter for* Business Week, *runs a 100-employee manufacturing company in Union City, California.*

James F. Joyce

MADNESS IN MONROVIA

What led to the Liberian bloodbath

Liberia exploded again in April. For over a century, Liberia had been heralded as the only democracy in Africa, but as today's interminable civil war drags on (150,000 people have died since 1990), it becomes clear that the war's deepest roots lie in the origins of Liberia in 1821 as a resettlement colony for freed and fugitive U.S. slaves.

The initial settlement was called Monrovia (as is today's capital) after President James Monroe. Although the United States government assisted the settlement effort, it was antislavery groups that carried out the project. Groups like the American Colonization Society, inspired by Protestant opposition to slavery, searched for ways to repatriate former slaves to the West Coast of Africa, from which many of their ancestors had come. There was little hope of returning these Africans to their "homes"; knowledge of their ethnic identification and native tongues was lost. Furthermore, in the United States there had been intermarriage with other West Africans, and children had been born of liaisons with white masters. The "resettlement" effort was in fact a wholly new "settlement" and the effort took little or no account of the indigenous peoples already living there.

These repatriated slaves were called Americo-Liberians, but were referred to derogatorily as "Congos" by the indigenous groups. The settlement initially operated under the aegis of the Protestant associations and their white American sponsors; the first governor was the cousin of James Buchanan, the last U.S. president before the American Civil War broke out in 1860.

A constitutional, democratic government was established in 1847. But from the beginning, it was flawed in practice, the irony being that a government run by redeemed slaves evolved into a society that repressed its "second-class citizens," the indigenous ethnic groups of the interior. (A League of Nations investigation during the 1930s verified the use of forced labor and the sale of people from the interior as slaves, and the president and vice-president had to resign over the matter.)

While the indigenous peoples of the interior existed largely on subsistence farming, the management of Liberia's national economy fell into outside hands. At a time when nonpayment of national debt was considered just cause for war, Britain, France, and Germany were poised to invade Liberia until President Theodore Roosevelt facilitated the restructuring of Liberia's payments. The supervision of the import/export duties of the ports was taken over by outside agencies. Multinational companies, most notably Firestone Tire and Rubber, held valuable rubber concessions,

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running the government and the economies of the areas under their control, until synthetic products reduced the value of rubber after World War II. Other natural and agricultural resources—minerals, lumber, coffee and cacao, spices and tropical fruits—were generally controlled by foreign companies. Even today, Liberia's most curious business, serving as a "flag of convenience" country, is run out of New York City. Ships registered in Liberia, but usually lacking any connection to it, sail the high seas without being subject to the safety inspections required by almost all other countries of registration. A Liberian-registered freighter from some third country will be manned by Malaysians or other Asian crews who live and work in unsafe and inhuman conditions. Although the Liberian government receives income from this operation, documentation as to the amount and its disposition has long been a source of contention.

The Liberian government persisted as something of a democracy for over 140 years, though for much of that time it was ruled by one party, the True Whig Party. Other parties were declared illegal soon after their founding. It was rare that a member of the indigenous ethnic groups achieved power, though some traditional chiefs asserted regional authority. Americo-Liberians retained both political and economic dominance through 1980.

Indigenous ethnic groups such as the Gio, Mano, and Kru live on both sides of the border with the Ivory Coast. The Kpelle and Mandingo are found both in Liberia and Guinea. The Krahn, one of the larger ethnic groups, live mainly within Liberian boundaries. Most of these groups are Christian, though some observe traditional animist practices. The Mandingo include a significant number of Muslims, who are traders and small business people. Many of them are relative newcomers to Liberia, having moved over the northern border from Guinea in the late 1960s, after its government exchanged colonialism for a socialist system that was seen as antagonistic to private enterprise.

William Tolbert, Jr., the last of the Americo-Liberian presidents, was overthrown in 1980 in a coup of the armed forces noncommissioned officers, led by Master Sergeant Samuel Kenyon Doe, a Krahn. (Members of the ethnic groups could achieve NCO status, but most of the upper ranks were dominated by "Congos.") The initial popular response to the coup was positive, but Doe's decade of leadership was marked by mistakes and atrocities that included the slaughter of ethnic peoples in the interior counties, a massacre of over 600 people at a Lutheran church in Monrovia, and the summary execution of many suspected of loyalty to the previous regimes or of plotting coups against Doe. Doe's great mistake, and the one that has had the most lasting impact, was his "ethnicizing" of the armed forces. Krahn people were given most of the authority in the military and the most significant posts in the government. The armed forces became almost completely Krahn and behaved more like a faction than a national army. Doe divided ethnic groups as never before.

The first group to rise against him was the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Ghankay Taylor. Though itself suffering splits, the NPFL swept through the interior. In 1990, it was poised to take Monrovia when a West African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG), with troops from six nations led by Nigeria and Ghana, was deployed to secure the capital. Despite their presence, infiltrators from another group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) under Prince Yeduo Johnson, captured Doe and then tortured and executed him.

ECOMOG retained control of the capital. But the irregular rebel groups, including a counter-revolutionary (anti-Taylor) organization, ULIMO (which would also eventually split along ethnic lines), and an NPFL splinter, the Liberian Peace Council, controlled the rest of the country and fought among themselves. Various "Councils of State" were formed over the next five years to try to govern Monrovia and bring peace among the factions. (At least seven accords were reached at one point or another.) The NPFL made a second attempt to take Monrovia in 1992, but were repelled by ECOMOG.

In August 1995, as a result of one of the accords, several of the combatant generals entered Monrovia to become part of a new Council of State. The troops were to be disarmed by ECOMOG, but this never happened.

This year, when the Krahn branch of ULIMO continued to be violent, its leader, Roosevelt Johnson, was excluded from the Council of State by the other members. They attempted to arrest him on April 13, and this led to the current round of violence in Monrovia. Johnson and the ULIMO fighters of the Krahn ethnic group fought their way to the downtown army barracks occupied by the remnants of the Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia and joined with them. The Krahn took hostages, including ECOMOG soldiers and some foreign nationals, specifically from the Lebanese business community. Their large barracks were then besieged by the Mandingo branch of ULIMO and by the NPFL which is largely composed of the Gio and Mano people who suffered most under Doe.

The scenes from Liberia are grim. War continues; a great many of the combatants are children from the countryside, some as young as ten years old, who commit atrocities often under the complicit eye of adult soldiers. Cholera has broken out. Ship-bound refugees are turned away at neighboring ports. The current chaos in Liberia, with all its historical resonance, is one of the most horrendous and seemingly unresolvable conflicts on the face of the earth today. Many good-willed people have worked for a negotiated settlement, but for five years it has eluded both Liberian nationals and outsiders. Many observers believe that the violence will continue until only one warlord is left standing. □

James F. Joyce, S.J., *spent six months in 1995 with the Jesuit Refugee Services in Monrovia, and in Guinea and Ivory Coast with Liberian refugees.*

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MORE THAN A ROOF

Promising moves in public housing

Ed Marciniak

Not long ago, I attended a national housing conference where a featured panelist was a woman introduced as a longtime resident of public housing. She herself then noted, matter-of-factly, that she had lived in public housing for forty-five years. For me, that admission was mind-blowing. Even more startling, however, was the realization that her remark had not caused even a ripple of surprise among the subsidized-housing professionals in the audience. Nonchalantly, they had come to accept public housing's way of life as a given, for which they felt no personal responsibility.

It's unlikely that informed members of the general public are so complacent, whether as taxpayers concerned with the costs or as citizens aware of the pathologies associated with much public housing. People in the know are beginning to insist that government subsidies must not only meet their recipients' immediate needs but must be oriented toward helping them become self-supporting. Recent developments in and around Chicago, the area I know best, confirm that most public housing clients, the poorest of the urban poor, have not given up. Many have already helped themselves escape the trap that public housing has become. We now know that there are ways of giving them a chance to do so that have been tested, at least on a small scale, and found workable. These approaches deserve to be better known and more broadly applied. But, as will be seen, many questions need to be asked and answered.

In a bipartisan effort, Congress is currently overhauling the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. Despite its noble purpose and promising beginnings with scattered, low-rise public housing, that legislation has produced something of a monster. Today the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] finances some 1.4 million apartments owned and managed by local housing authorities. Another 1.5 million privately owned units are federally subsidized through rent vouchers of one kind or another. Taking into account these programs and a host of others sponsored by HUD, the department has become the nation's largest slumlord.

But the problem is not primarily the numbers or costs. Our giant high-rise public housing projects have become ghettos for the urban poor: debasing conglomerations riddled with drugs, gangs, crime, and poverty, peopled by far too high a proportion of single-family households, some now in their third and fourth generation. The average income of families living in Chicago's public housing is $2,500. Broadly speaking, a fatal flaw of these projects is that they provide tenant families with little else than space: little in the way of opportunity or incentive to better themselves and their children. In most cities the high-rise projects, often with as many inhabitants as a small town, house not a single teacher, nurse, firefighter, manager, technician, or civil servant and offer few role models for the children, few standard-setters for the adults, and scant motivation to become self-sufficient.

In recognition of these realities, Congress has persuaded HUD to begin dismantling these housing projects by giving residents, through rent vouchers, the option of living in privately owned housing in mixed-income neighborhoods; by scattering low-rise public housing throughout the city and its suburbs; by tearing down vacant high rises instead of rebuilding them; by using HUD dollars to attract other investment in additional housing for families of low and moderate income; and by stricter screening of applicants and the prompt eviction of lawbreakers who are drug dealers or gang leaders. In April, HUD Secretary Henry G. Cisneros released a report on "The Transformation of America's Public Housing," reporting these and other steps HUD is taking to ensure "long-term recovery."

Congress has approved, though as a pilot project, a "Moving to Opportunity" initiative, which offers public housing families a chance to move to scattered-site public housing in the city or the suburbs. This modestly funded program, already in operation in Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles, New York, and elsewhere, is being evaluated by its success or failure in escorting families into the urban mainstream.

"I love building dams, but I hate the paperwork!"

Ed Marciniak, *president of the Institute of Urban Life at Loyola University Chicago, chairs the City Club of Chicago's committee on the future of public housing in Chicago.*

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Important data will be collected about families who become home owners or leaseholders paying conventional rents. What were the bridges or escalators they used to leave public housing? Who provided the ladders of opportunity? Are the relocated families now in better housing? How many stayed in the suburbs, how many moved back to the city?

"Moving to Opportunity" was modeled on a successful program sponsored by Chicago's Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. Since 1976, the Council has used federal funds to screen and then relocate more than 6,000 public housing families, most of them female-headed, into privately owned apartments, half of them in suburbs. By bidding good-by to public housing, most of the families not only bettered their living conditions but also greatly improved their children's opportunities. Among the suburban children, only 5 percent dropped out of school, 54 percent attended college, and 27 percent were enrolled in a four-year college. As for the parents, 75 percent found jobs. When people's expectations were raised and standards established, many started living up to them. Residential mobility made a difference.

This good news is part of a larger movement toward depopulation of Chicago's family projects; occupancy has decreased from 137,000 in 1980 to 80,000 in 1995. More importantly, the council's work reflects a growing awareness among government and private funders of antipoverty programs of the need to find answers for certain key, long-neglected questions. How do people shed chronic dependency to achieve self-sufficiency?

"If there is a way out of our current bout with cynicism about government, it lies in seeing the primary purpose of government programs as enhancing the capacity of people to succeed—what John Stuart Mill, the great philosopher of liberalism, called 'help toward doing without help.'"

—*E. J. Dionne, Jr.*, The Washington Post National Weekly Edition, *April 29–May 5, 1996*

How do we reverse the nation's poverty rate, which declined in the 1970s and early 1980s but has been inching up ever since? How is the underclass turned into a working class?

Accordingly, the role of the private sector serving poverty-engulfed neighborhoods is also under scrutiny. Churches, social service agencies, youth clubs, and counseling centers are being asked to link short-term aid to more lasting improvement, to do more than collect the statistics on Sunday attendance, on youngsters who use the gym, on Christmas baskets, on kids in day care, on midnight basketball, or on mothers in self-improvement classes. Funders want to know whether and how their dollars made a difference: How many of the families were no longer on public aid? What percentage of the teen-agers finished high school? How many adults found jobs?

Similar questions can be and are now being asked about the persistence of homelessness. How did it happen that the homeless were made the immediate responsibility of local housing officials? Many of the homeless are jobless or the victims of a family break-up. Many were evicted from mental health institutions and dumped mercilessly on city streets. Some are vagabonds, down-and-outers addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. All may qualify as homeless, but what they desperately need encompasses a lot more than a space to live in.

Too often, of course, discussion of such problems devolves into ideological debates, focused on "Who is to blame?" rather than on "What is to be done?" On homelessness, however, as with public housing, there are pragmatic initiatives in play. An example is Deborah's Place in Chicago, a shelter for homeless women but with a difference. From day one, the purpose of Deborah's Place has been to help the women return to a more normal lifestyle—a job, a family, or, in case of need, to a caring institution that matches the woman's special problem. At three different locations, each with a staged program, Deborah's Place works to "help women leave the streets and shelters behind for new lives of independence, productivity, and well-being." As clients move up and out, they leave room and time for other women to be assisted.

On ending joblessness, strategy can also make a difference. Suburban Job Link, with offices in Chicago's South Lawndale community and suburban Bensenville, uses a unique method for promoting upward mobility. On contract with relative-

Christopher J. Renz

Writing Lessons (III)

"As for me, I am already poured out as a libation...."
The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy

It is noon.
I stop to watch steam
rise up from clay bricks and
fold open in paradigms

which I collect into morning
a plainchant from my heart
poured into cupped hands
which I raise high

hoping the sun will evaporate
my life into the blue
set me dancing
before I seep through
the empty space
between my fingers.

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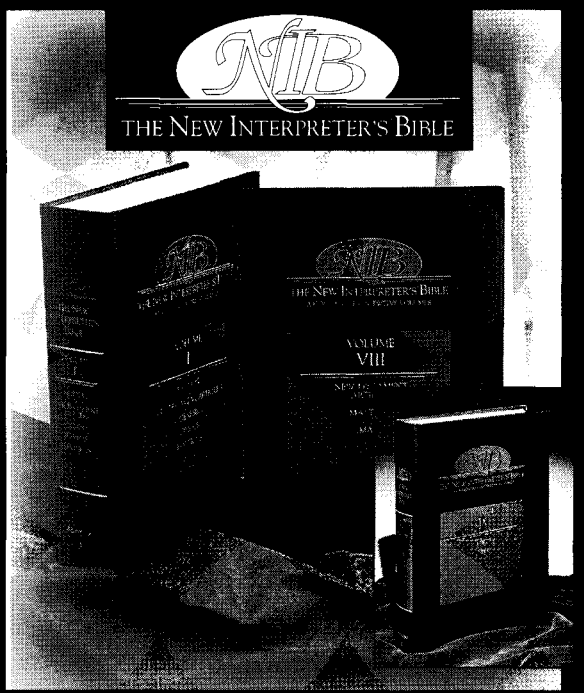
ly job-rich suburban employers, the organization buses workers to temporary jobs that often lead to "working interviews" for applicants who want to demonstrate their potential to fill entry-level positions. Factory owners and other employers are invited to hire any worker full-time without a fee, thus supplying the missing rung on a stepladder to year-round employment. Through its "no-charge" arrangement, Job Link will place 1,000 "temps" into regular jobs with benefits in the next twelve months. Finally, it continues to bus the newly hired until they arrange transportation on their own, through a car pool, for example. As a not-for-profit, Job Link is funded by government and foundation grants and by its own earned income.

Another strategic point of entry for encouraging upward mobility has to do with school choice. Over the past decade it has become evident that nonpublic schools, especially those under religious sponsorship, have been remarkably successful in easing not only children but also their low-income parents into the urban mainstream. Nearly one of every four youngsters enrolled in an elementary or secondary school in Chicago attends a nonpublic school. Now, hundreds of scholarships to attend Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal schools are given to youngsters who live in the Cabrini Green, Henry Horner, Rockwell Gardens, and other public housing projects. The aid covers only part of the tuition, requiring parents or guardians to pay the balance and fees.

Though statistics are not available, it is our experience that the decision by a public housing family to enroll children in a private school is often the first step that eventually leads to an apartment in the private housing market. The choice made by a deserted mother, taken at personal sacrifice, is rewarded and reinforced when she sees that her child is in fact making educational progress; she is likely to strive even harder to climb out of poverty in order to continue sending her child to the school of her choice.

A final example—useful even though at present it is a matter of aspiration rather than achievement—returns to a housing program. It will be operative in 1997 when Chicago's Lawson YMCA finishes rehabilitating its twenty-five-story building to provide 583 single-occupancy rooms. The difference here lies in the overall aim, which is not just to provide livable space for otherwise homeless persons but also to help people who are homeless, jobless, and difficult-to-employ get jobs, preferably within walking distance, and become self-sufficient. The YMCA staff will work, for example, with people who are recovering from substance abuse by concentrating aggressively on job training and job getting. Success will be measured not just by occupancy rates but, more importantly, by the number who have moved to independent living.

As with the other examples, the virtue of the YMCA initiative lies in its responding not just to today's need but also to tomorrow's challenge. To paraphrase columnist Robert J. Samuelson, the United States struggles through a soul-searching transition from an era of entitlement to an era of responsibility. □



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BOB DOLE ON 'SOCIALISM'

It's all right for the rich

Peter Dreier

Speaking before the National Association of Realtors on April 29, Senator Bob Dole (R–Kans.) labeled public housing "one of the last bastion's of socialism in the world." He called for dismantling the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and recommended replacing government-assisted housing projects with housing vouchers to help poor Americans pay for rent in private housing.

Dole's comments ignored some basic facts. First, public housing represents a tiny share of the nation's housing stock and even a relatively small part of HUD's budget. Second, we already have a housing voucher program, but the Republicans thwarted the Clinton administration's efforts to expand it. Third, HUD's budget is dwarfed by the federal government's most expensive housing subsidy program, the mortgage interest deduction for homeowners, most of which goes to affluent households.

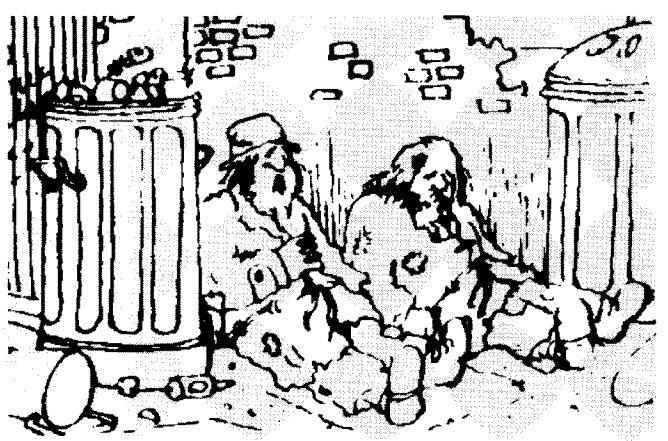
Subsidized housing for the poor is essentially a lottery, not an entitlement. The HUD budget, now $26 billion, provides housing subsidies to 4.1 million low-income households, that is, 28 percent of the 13.8 million poor renter households who are eligible for federal housing assistance. Of those who receive housing aid, only 1.36 million families live in public housing units; another 1.65 million live in private, government-subsidized developments; and another 1.06 million receive the kind of housing vouchers Dole lauded. But that still leaves almost 10 million poor households to fend for themselves in the private housing marketplace, most of whom pay more than half of their incomes to keep a roof over their heads.

Two years ago, President Bill Clinton asked Congress to approve an extremely modest pilot program, called Moving to Opportunity (MTO), to help low-income inner-city families move to private apartments in better neighborhoods. Clinton asked for $164 million to provide vouchers for 1,305 families in five cities. The then-Democratic majority in Congress enacted the plan, but only over the objections of Dole's Republicans who called it "social engineering."

Is Dole now calling for a dramatic expansion of this approach? Based on the cost of the current Section 8-voucher program, it would cost about $30 billion a year to provide these 10 million poor families with vouchers to cover the difference between 30 percent of their income (the federal standard) and rents in private apartments. Where would we get the money for such a universal housing voucher program for the poor?

One solution might be to put a ceiling on the mortgage interest deduction for homeowners, a "tax expenditure" that last year cost the federal government $58.3 billion—more than double the HUD budget. Wealthy homeowners don't think of themselves as living in subsidized housing, but they get the bulk of the nation's federal housing help. Last year taxpayers with incomes over $100,000 (5.65 percent of all returns) received $29 billion in mortgage interest deductions—half of the total amount. (In other words, the $29 billion in tax subsidies for those with incomes over $100,000 alone surpasses the entire HUD budget). The 1.6 million taxpayers with incomes over $200,000 received $12.6 billion in mortgage interest deductions. Thus, the wealthiest 1.2 percent of all taxpayers received 21.6 percent of the homeowner tax subsidies. So while only 28 percent of America's poor receive any federal housing assistance, 82.5 percent of households with incomes above $200,000 receive a mortgage tax break. The average subsidy for this latter group last year was $9,763. This is almost three times the cost of a typical Section-8 housing voucher.

Last year, when Senator Bob Packwood was chair of the Senate Finance Committee, he suggested limiting the interest deduction to $250,000 in mortgage debt. (The current ceiling is $1 million.) The Congressional Budget Office estimated that this would save the government more than $35 billion



"I often think it would be nice to get the opportunity to betray my socialist principles."

Peter Dreier *is the E. P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics and director of the Public Policy Program at Occidental College in Los Angeles.*

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over five years, and affect only about 1.2 million of the wealthiest taxpayers. The savings could be used to expand the housing voucher program that Dole suddenly discovered. But Dole failed to endorse Packwood's proposal.

In other words, Dole opposes "socialism" for the poor but is all in favor of welfare for the rich. This may be linked to the fact that the real estate industry (including the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Homebuilders, and the American Bankers Association) is one of Dole's most generous campaign contributors. They've made preserving the mortgage interest deduction the litmus test for their support.

Dole told the Realtors that public housing had "failed" and that local housing authorities have become "landlords of misery." He's partly right, but mostly wrong. Many older projects in the big cities are physically isolated, high-rise ghettos, underfunded and poorly maintained (*see* previous article). That's why HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros has approved plans to tear down the most severely distressed public housing projects. But the biggest secret about public housing is that most of it is well-managed. The majority of units are in small and mid-size developments. Almost a million families are now on waiting lists to get into public housing, a testament to the failure of private landlords to serve the poor.

During the Depression, public housing advocates, like their European counterparts, initially envisioned it for the middle class as well as the poor. Ironically, the National Association of Realtors and other housing industry groups sought to sabotage the program before it got started. Warning about the specter of "socialism," they successfully lobbied to limit public housing to the poor so it wouldn't compete with privately owned housing.

Republicans now frequently use public housing as a metaphor for the failure of activist government. But it represents only a small fraction of the nation's housing for the poor. It certainly isn't primarily responsible for persistent poverty, racial segregation, and urban crime. Moreover, during the past decade, there's been almost no new public housing built. Almost all new federally funded housing developments have been sponsored by nonprofit community groups like churches and neighborhood associations.

For Republicans, HUD has been an easy target. But the major HUD scandal—where high government officials used agency funds to reward political friends and campaign contributors—took place during the Reagan administration. If HUD is now identified in the public's mind with mismanagement and corruption, it's the GOP that should get much of the blame.

Dole could have demonstrated real leadership by telling the Realtors that the way we now distribute federal housing subsidy funds is wasteful and unfair. We subsidize the rich to purchase huge homes without helping hardworking families buy a small bungalow or most poor families to rent an apartment. Instead, he went for the cheap shot, scapegoating public housing for the poor as "socialism," while telling the powerful Realtors what they wanted to hear. □

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PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Ten questions

Thomas A. Shannon

Bicoastal decisions of federal circuit courts have upheld the practice of physician-assisted suicide (PAS). Thus the United States has now entered the broader international debate over managing the end of life. Holland has accepted both euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide for several years. Last year one of the territories of Australia provided the same options. Referenda on these topics were held in California and Washington State, where they were turned back by the voters, and in Oregon, where a measure to permit PAS is now under appeal. And for several years Jack Kevorkian has been carrying on his own brand of guerrilla warfare and theater in Michigan for the cause of physician-assisted suicide. But now two federal circuit courts have succeeded in doing what Kevorkian has been unable to do: upholding the practice of physicians aiding the dying by giving patients the means by which to kill themselves.

These rulings, which will in all likelihood be appealed and will probably not be implemented for quite a while—if at all—focus debate on issues that have been simmering for decades. I would like to ask some questions concerning the practice of PAS, questions that I hope will bring out the seriousness and complexity of the issues involved.

First, why so fast? The PAS debate is already falling into the traditional American practice of acting first and thinking later, or never. What PAS needs more than anything is debate. The positive effects of such debate can be shown by recalling the very intense national and international debates that surrounded the Karen Ann Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan cases. Both involved ethical and legal elements in the removal of therapies deemed nonbeneficial by the families, a ventilator in the Quinlan case and nutrition and hydration in the Cruzan case.

The prolonged public debate served to clarify the issues and helped establish a national consensus which supported the removal of therapies that prolonged life but provided few other benefits. While the process was long and extremely painful for the patients' families, the nation benefited because there was no fast resolution.

Second, why do experts dominate the debate? In some ways the issue is being managed by individuals and interest groups committed to one side or the other. Obviously they should be in the debate but they aren't the only interested parties, and their interests are not necessarily the critical ones. Only a genuine national, popular debate can benefit the resolution of this issue. The national discussion over Quinlan and Cruzan were entered into by citizens from all walks of life. Bringing in the viewpoints of the people most likely to be affected by the outcome of the debate will ensure that a wide spectrum of issues are expressed and evaluated.

Third, can we get the debate out of the courts? We know that *Roe* decriminalized abortion and that the practice of abortion has drastically changed, but the issue itself was not resolved by *Roe*. I suspect the same will be true here. Regardless of how the Supreme Court might decide—and eventually this issue of PAS will come before it—the decision will still have to be received and implemented. To the extent that such an important decision is made in the absence of a national debate, it will serve only as the source of further division.

Fourth, can we avoid comparing this issue to abortion? While there are obvious conceptual and principled issues relating to the sanctity of life and the right to life, there are also critical differences. In PAS we are clearly talking about adults. We are also talking about individuals who are supposed to be making this decision for themselves and will perform this action by themselves. There is no question about the personhood of an individual interested in PAS, there is no issue of another having a right over this individual, and there is no issue of another's life being ended by the patient's decision to end his or her own life. Thus, some of the key issues surrounding abortion are absent. Conflating the debates would serve no good, other than scoring ideological points which would only further obfuscate the issue.

Fifth, why are we focusing on PAS instead of first reviewing how the care of the dying is being managed currently? Or, to ask the question differently, is there something going on with the care of the dying that is prompting this debate? I would answer yes. Unfortunately, even though we have had an extensive debate over extraordinary means and the forgoing of nonbeneficial therapy, medical practice seems to be to continue life-prolonging interventions as long and widely as possible. A recent study revealed that do-not-resuscitate orders are written only many weeks after patients request them, and that individuals are kept in intensive-care

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units longer than their conditions warrant. Even following the second phase of this study, in which physicians and other health-care workers were explicitly informed about responding to patients' wishes, practice barely changed. My general sense is that interventions are being continued much longer than is medically or ethically warranted. Thus the PAS movement may be a cry for help, or may be saying that if physicians won't stop useless therapy, then patients will literally have to take matters into their own hands. Maybe the first step is to ensure that useless therapies are terminated, not patients.

Sixth, why does the alleged right to kill oneself imply that a physician can be, or ought to be obligated to provide assistance? The mythology of rugged individualism and the widely celebrated autonomy of the patient which drive this debate suddenly are nowhere to be found. The argument is that individuals do not have access to the effective means to take their own lives, or that under certain conditions they are unable to do so. Both claims are probably true, but we need to examine carefully why the claim that I may have some kind of a right to kill myself confers some sort of an obligation on another to assist me. Suicide, I take it, may be a liberty right, which means that as long as no one stops me from doing what I want, my right is secured. No one, however, is mandated ethically or legally to assist me in achieving this alleged right. So why should suicide be the exception?

Seventh, do we want to change the role of the doctor from healer to someone who assists in killing? While this may sound like an attempt to stack the deck, it is nonetheless a real issue. Legalizing PAS will dramatically change the role of the physician (*see* Leon R. Kass, "Why Doctors Must Not Kill," *Commonweal*, August 9, 1991). Recognition of such a shift has not yet been a significant part of the debate. Note has been made of late of the deleterious effect of the changing economics of health care on the relationship between patient and physician. Those who are worried about the diminished time a physician is allotted to spend with a patient, or the decreased therapeutic options a physician may have to offer a patient, ought to be concerned about a more fundamental change that would allow the physician to offer the patient an agent that would end all treatment prematurely.

Eighth, concern for the terminally ill who are suffering is a driving force in the movement to legalize PAS, but might economics also play a role? It is cheaper to help someone commit suicide than to maintain that person in an intensive-care unit—or anywhere else in the hospital. So we need to keep an eye on the economics of health care and the growing use of cost-effectiveness criteria to determine appropriate treatment options.

Ninth, will options become obligations, especially if they are a lot cheaper? This is a difficult question because essentially only time will tell. Nonetheless, options have a funny way of becoming established as standard medical practice. Any diagnostic test might serve as an example. While many of these have a critical role in medicine, often they are mandated by the doctor so that he or she can say, during a malpractice trial, that the treatment included every test possible and left no possibility unexamined. Thus the institutionalization of defensive medicine and the removal of choice from both patient and physician.

Tenth, do people think that the nature of PAS will be changed by suggesting that this is a medical therapy? The role of the physician is to cure within the limits of both his or her capacity and that of modern medicine. The function of a therapy is to cure the patient or at least ameliorate the symptoms. The function of medicine has not been to provide assistance so a patient can kill him- or herself. The role of the physician has been healing, not helping someone to commit suicide. In PAS, the nature of medicine and therapy is being given a radically new role. By having a physician assist in suicide we are trying to legitimatize it by medicalizing the event. But suicide is neither a medical procedure nor a medical therapy.

While PAS appeals in a genuine sense to the relief of the suffering of the terminally ill and the dying, it would profoundly change the nature of medicine and the role of the dying. No matter how poignant are the cases presented to us, we would be well-advised to think this one through very carefully. This is not a private decision; it is a profoundly social one. □

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Richard Alleva

ME ROCHESTER, YOU JANE

Zeffirelli's 'Jane Eyre'

The latest screen version of *Jane Eyre*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, has pace, sufficient atmosphere, and generally good acting. But it also conveys a feeling of second-handedness that truly first-rate adaptations avoid. Rather than rediscovering Charlotte Brontë's vision of revolt against societal tyranny, the director seems to be packaging our fond old memories of the Gothic romance we now take *Jane Eyre* to be, though the 1847 novel was never intended as a genre piece. The unconventionality of the heroine and the tormented unscrupulousness of Rochester (whose near-bigamy may be immoral but is also an attempt to restore love and sanity to his life) shocked many of its first readers. That power to shock isn't in this movie. The years have subdued the impact of the novel, and this new rendering doesn't wash away the pleasant patina of a century-and-a-half's acceptance. Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* feels like an instant classic: smooth, confident of our approval, a little dull.

How could it be otherwise? How could we, having experienced the latest developments of the women's movement and all manner and combinations of sexuality-in-revolt, still be shocked by a story of an intelligent woman who claims her rights as a moral being? Isn't self-assertion something now so accepted that only self-abasement is likely to raise eyebrows (as with those TV movies and talk shows about women who refuse to leave their battering husbands)?

Well, a classic is only a classic until you start reading it. *Then* it disturbs; *then* it may still shock.

Take the opening scenes of book and movie, which deal with the oppressed existence of the orphaned Jane in a household of cruel relatives. The movie, of course, must synopsize, but look at the incident that the adaptors (Zeffirelli and British playwright Hugh Whitemore) choose to epitomize little Jane's response to her mistreatment. We see her roughed up by the vicious little beasts who are her cousins and thrust into a closet where she turns round and round in helpless bewilderment. It's a pathetic enough image but it's also exactly the sort of thing we expect in any movie about an orphan. And getting exactly what we want doesn't rouse us.

Open the book and what a surprise! Little Jane is indeed baited by her beastly male cousin, and what does the helpless little girl-child do? Why, she pounces upon the much larger boy and proceeds to beat the daylights out of him. This is how Jane Eyre's independence of mind and spirit first manifests itself—as sheer physical wrath, as scratching and biting, as animal revolt. To picture a female child behaving this way (imagine Dickens's Little Nell reacting so fiercely!) must have been the first of many shocks for the novel's early readers, but the movie substitutes easygoing pathos for that shock.

Or take a much later episode. Jane has learned of Rochester's mad wife and her dreams of marital happiness have been shattered. She leaves her lover's estate. The movie's Jane, of course, drives away in a carriage with all her baggage aboard. I say "of course" because we who have watched "Masterpiece Theater" episodes are used to images of distraught heroines being hustled off in broughams. Nothing unusual there. But turn to the novel and your jaw drops. There, Jane leaves, yes, but on foot and with nothing but the clothes on her back, abandoning herself to the inclemencies of weather and the doubtful civility of anyone she encounters on the road. Her departure is radical in its rejection of Rochester, of hope, of propriety, and (since it's an act of great peril) almost of life itself. When Jane revolts she goes all the way. She's an extremist heroine of an extremist book. But Zeffirelli's Jane Eyre acts moderately and mousily.

This moderation and mousiness is reinforced by the director's casting and direction of Anna Paquin and Charlotte Gainsbourg as, respectively, the child and adult Jane. Paquin, spontaneous and expressive in *The Piano*, is so overdirected by Zeffirelli that you can sense the director signaling to her from the other side of the camera—"Move your head a little to the left, *carissima*! Now think sad thoughts! Cry! Cry!" The effect hardly conveys the impression of a girl trying to be true to her own nature.

You can see why Zeffirelli cast Charlotte Gainsbourg. She is homely in an interesting way, self-contained, somewhat elfin (Rochester to Jane: "Oh, Jane, you strange, unearthly thing!"), and the line

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of her mouth is a fascinating scribble. But appearance can never take the place of performance in the case of a major dramatic role. Her performance is absolutely static. Gainsbourg speaks in the same monotone from beginning to end, even in the later scenes where Jane is supposed to be a self-possessed, more assertive woman. When the actress reads the last line of the film—"Our happiness is complete"—Gainsbourg sounds as if she were announcing funeral arrangements. Nor is the monotony purely vocal. When Rochester looks at Jane in her bridal gown and exclaims on her new beauty, no sense of freshly discovered womanliness or nascent sexuality emanates from Gainsbourg. Jane Eyre is meant to be subdued, not squashed.

That's the worst of the movie. Now let me speak of what makes it watchable, even diverting.

The script, though it defangs Brontë, is a generally deft piece of work, not just an abridgment but an intelligent distillation of the plot. Playwright Hugh Whitemore cleverly finds just the bits of Brontë's dialogues that can be spoken without jarring our ears, and he rewrites or eliminates what might seem florid. The script is, perhaps, a little too trim in that it hops from one crucial scene to the next without giving the viewer's attention enough time to rest before the next crisis. Still, better too much dramatic muscle than lard.

A great cinematographer, David Watkins, preserves a nice balance in capturing the look of Rochester's country house. By day, the place is a miracle of comfort to the formerly starved and abused Jane but at night a house of horror where a madwoman roams, threatening to burn people alive in their beds. Watkins knows how to manipulate sunlight to convey the comfort and how to place shadows to intimate the dread. And both Watkins and Zeffirelli accomplish something very rare in movies set in large houses: they give the viewer a sense of just where one room is in relation to the others. You can understand just how far away Jane's bedroom is from her little pupil's and from Rochester's, and how long it would take her to get to either at a moment of physical danger. In this tale that features pyromania and hairbreadth rescues, the clarification of location and distance enhances the suspense.

Unlike Orson Welles's super-Byronic 1944 Rochester opposite Joan Fontaine (James Agee: "...Welles treating himself to road-operatic sculpturings of body, cloak, and diction, his eyes glinting in the Rembrandt gloom, at every chance, like side-orders of jelly"), William Hurt's performance emphasizes the ravaged decency that Rochester tries to disguise with cynical insouciance. Hurt possesses only a fair knack for wearing nineteenth-century clothes, and his British accent sounds propped up rather than commanded, but he succeeds in conveying the vulnerability that draws Jane to him. What's missing is the dangerousness which also attracts the heroine.

And dangerousness is what's missing from the entire movie. For all the pyromania and bigamy and madness of its story, this movie is too nicely manicured. □

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Crazed protagonist deranges novel

Brain Fever
Valerie Sayers
Doubleday, $23.95, 308 pp.

Alice McDermott

The problem at the heart of this witty, energetic fifth novel by the author of *Due East* and *The Distance between Us* is not that its narrator, Tim Rooney, is a madman: bug-eyed geniuses giving diabolically brilliant accounts of themselves are not unknown in literature. The problem is that Tim Rooney ("middle-aged failed academic, failed musician, failed husband") is mentally ill—a far less romantic assessment, and one more likely to be associated in the contemporary reader's mind with emotional pain and ruined lives. Those associations belie the wit and energy and exuberance of Rooney's careening account, in an endearing Southern drawl, of a horrendous mental breakdown.

Tim Rooney has broken down before. Seven years ago he returned to his father's house in Due East, South Carolina—site of the author's four previous novels—to "have a crackup." "I took a whiz in the front row of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at the midnight Mass. I made various claims to be the Christ child and Blaise Pascal and Bobby What's-his-name, the sympathetic one on 'Dallas.'" He has lived through "the Clozapine years, the lithium years, the Prozac years" and, as the novel begins, has "reentered sanity." He plans to marry Mary Faith Rapple, the lovely young girl next door and to adopt her eleven-year-old son, Jesse, whom he adores.

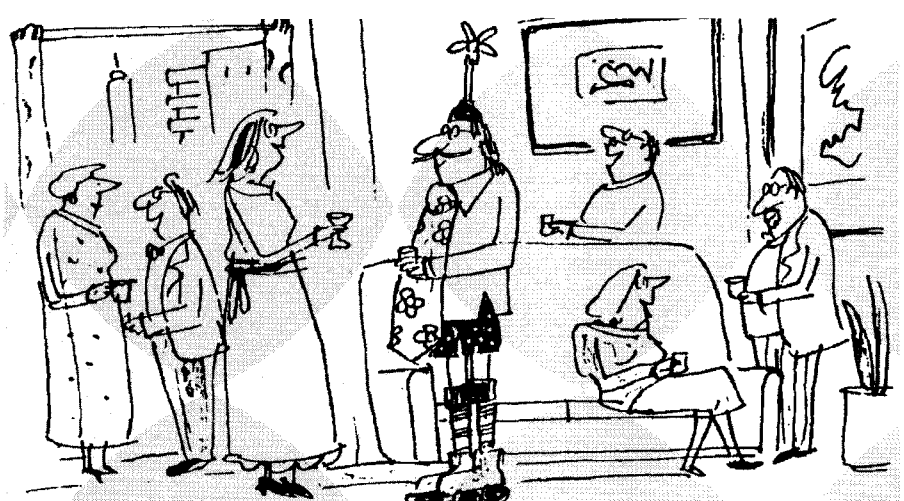
But then Mary Faith arrives at his house on Holy Thursday evening in a new Easter outfit and asks that he bring her to church Easter morning. She is an atheist. He is, if not a good Catholic, a tenacious one. Suddenly, the shadow of his illness descends: the hallucinations, the buzzing sound, the chill. Brain fever.

He calls off the wedding ("I cannot be responsible for a false conversion"), and then loses his own faith on Holy Saturday when he wakes in his sister Dottie's bed—Dottie, the youngest of the Rooney offspring, who drowned herself at twenty-one. On Easter Monday morning, he stuffs $15,000 into his socks and heads for New York City. "With a new clarity, sharper even than the Drixoral variety," he knows he must find Bernadette, his wife from a six-day marriage that ended twenty years ago.

It is not surprising that religion should be a catalyst for Rooney's breakdown. His father was a musician prone to violence, but his mother was an activist Catholic. "She lined her children up at the kitchen table to write appeals to her congressman for civil rights and human rights and poverty rights and the right to be as right about the moral issues of the day as she always happened to be." Rooney himself believed a statue of the Blessed Mother smiled at him as a child.

Leaving Due East, Rooney is followed by a black man in a black truck—a guardian angel? In Charleston he picks up Angela Bliss, a beautiful hitchhiker running away from her own wedding. Angela is remarkably nonplussed by Rooney, even as he nearly drowns them both, even as he grows more and more paranoid about being followed. When they reach New York, she brings him, blacked-out and raving, to a loft in Soho owned by two more Southerners, Velma and Fred. In the morning, Rooney explains away his deranged behavior by telling them he is an actor testing a role, and Velma and Fred, in what is either incredible naiveté or unsurpassed Southern hospitality, invite him to stay on.

In the course of his forty-day descent into insanity, Rooney has bouts of clarity, bouts of memory, bouts of joy and panic and lust and regret. Sayers is remarkably skillful in seamlessly moving him back and forth, from one state to the other, in delineating his transformation from charming eccentric—he reminds



"And what do you do, Mr. Caldoon, when you're not skirting the fine line between eccentricity and madness?"

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everyone of Kramer from "Seinfeld"—to deranged street creature or, as he would have it, outlaw.

Rooney soon discovers that his guardian angel is G.B. Bright, his former student, and that Bright has been asked by Father Berkeley, Rooney's pastor in Due East, to keep an eye on him. G.B. does more than that, he rescues Rooney from the street, drinks with him, feeds him as he deteriorates, bathes and changes him when he becomes incontinent, even, with a wisdom that mysteriously eludes all the other characters, attempts to get him to a doctor.

Meanwhile, back in Due East, Father Berkeley has enlisted Mary Faith in a quest to rescue Rooney, telling her, "You have the chance to make a choice now. You can chose not to take on the nursing of a man who will have these...incidents all his life." She and Jesse head for New York with the old priest, who is certain that on the fortieth day of his madness, Rooney will take his own life.

Instead, there is a reunion. Having found Bernadette, Rooney has moved on to confront larger reasons for guilt: his sister's suicide, his mother's loss of faith, Bosnia. Ensconced in Washington Square Park, clothes in tatters, feet bleeding, feverish, he engages the crowds in a mad chant: Bosnia Bosnia—"so many souls to save,"—and that's where Mary Faith and Jesse find him.

As in her previous novels, Sayers's voice is so engaging, so precise and funny and strong, that it is unfortunate here to find her subject undermining it. It is not that the author lacks sympathy for her character's situation—Mary Faith acknowledges and embodies the pain Rooney's illness can cause—or that her story needs more pathos, more seriousness. It is rather that she, like Angela and Velma, seems slow to recognize that this loquacious Southern eccentric is in the throes of a serious illness, and that our understanding of mental illness, like our knowledge of tuberculosis and cancer, has changed forever its usefulness as a literary device. □

Alice McDermott *is the author of* At Weddings and Wakes *(1992) among other novels. She lives in Pittsburgh.*

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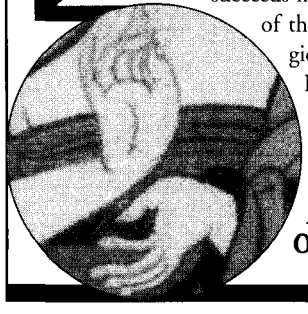

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MISSING THE FOREST

Changing Witness
Catholic Bishops and Public Policy, 1917–94
Michael Warner
Ethics and Public Policy Center and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, $20, 202 pp.

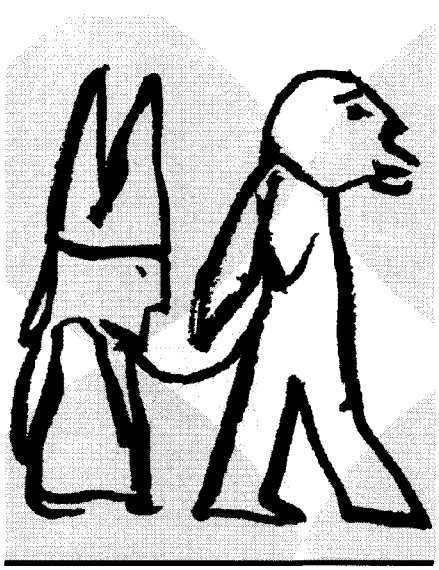
Timothy A. Byrnes

Think quickly: Which public policy issue has been the centerpiece of the American Catholic hierarchy's political agenda over the last twenty-five years? Which issue has occasioned the most politically forceful statements by the bishops, both individually and collectively, and which issue has involved the bishops most directly in the American political process? If like mine your answer to these questions is "abortion," then you will be as surprised as I was at the tone and conclusions of Michael Warner's *Changing Witness: Catholic Bishops and Public Policy, 1917–94*.

In this highly interesting but deeply flawed book, Warner, a historian at the Central Intelligence Agency, argues that the American Catholic hierarchy in the 1970s and 1980s, manipulated by leftists and pacifists on the national staff of the United States Catholic Conference, abandoned the church's Thomistic vision of an organic society, and its traditional condemnation of Soviet communism. In place of these traditional foundations, he argues, the bishops have turned to trendy calls for "distributive justice," and morally suspect criticisms of American foreign and defense policy. He also scores the bishops for abandoning the principle of subsidiarity in favor of national programs and bureaucracies. And he laments the hierarchy's usurpation of the laity's proper role in applying the church's moral teachings to specific political and social circumstances.

As a critique of the bishops' conference as a bureaucratic entity and of the bishops' famous pastoral letters on peace and the economy, there is much of value in Warner's analysis. But it is an analysis representing one perspective in the church's own culture wars. Accordingly, Warner clearly lays out a number of ideological and philosophical disputes that have been raging within American Catholicism for decades, and he articulately offers his own position on each of them:

- The bishops, for example, saw American nuclear policy of the 1970s and '80s as a central element in a dangerous arms race; Warner lauds this same policy as the key to America' righteous victory in the cold war.
- The bishops denounced income inequality in the United States as a moral scandal; Warner prefers to view the American economy in terms of what he calls "the papal vision of a natural social order—with its Aristotelian view of a benign and universally beneficial social inequality."
- The bishops expressed outrage at the violence and oppression perpetrated by U.S.-supported governments in Central America; Warner emphasizes the evils of Marxism-Leninism and draws attention to the development and flowering of democracy in the region.



This kind of dialogue with the bishops' conference is a very worthy exercise. Not all of his readers will agree with Warner's judgments, of course, but all will benefit from engagement with his arguments. Moreover, many of his readers will also appreciate the way he places those arguments, and his disagreements with the bishops, in a broad historical and philosophical context. What is much less worthy, however, is the way in which Warner's ideological bias blinds him to the role that abortion has played in shaping, and at times distorting, the bishops' role in American politics. As a result, Warner fails to recognize how the hierarchy's positions on these other policy issues, regardless of those positions' merits or appropriate philosophical grounding, have often been subordinated, in the political arena, to the church's opposition to abortion.

Over and over again, during the period in which Warner claims the conference's staff has been leading the bishops astray, those same bishops took pointed, and at times partisan, public stands on abortion policy and politics. Leading spokesmen for the hierarchy directly challenged candidates for national office over their stands on abortion; bishops across the nation banned prochoice politicians from speaking at Catholic functions or at Catholic institutions; some of those same politicians were denied sacraments by local prelates; others were threatened with excommunication or otherwise denounced from pulpits, cathedral courtyards, and press-conference podiums. And, of course, just recently, the American cardinals joined together to "strenuously oppose and condemn" President Bill Clinton's "shameful" veto of the ban on intact dilation and extraction/partial birth abortions.

This history of pointed and explicitly political activity cannot be ignored when characterizing the Catholic hierarchy's approach to American public policy. Moreover, for better or for worse depending on one's point of view, the political-

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ly charged nature of these anti-abortion activities simply has not been matched by the hierarchy's treatment of those issues to which Warner gives so much attention.

There are, to be sure, many potential explanations for the bishops' overriding emphasis on abortion as a public policy and political issue. Maybe abortion really is, as Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston has repeatedly claimed, the "critical issue" of our day, requiring particular attention and energy. Maybe those bishops who most loudly trumpet the church's teaching on abortion are more willing to accept the partisan implications of their actions than are some of their colleagues. Maybe the unusually close relationship between the church's moral teaching on abortion—abortion is wrong—and the church's policy position on abortion—abortion ought to be illegal—creates a uniquely partisan dynamic concerning the issue. The relationship between the church's moral teaching on the dignity of the poor, for example, and particular policy positions that might flow from that teaching is not nearly as obvious.

These are a few explanations for the emphasis on abortion, and I am sure others could provide more. I, for one, would like to know what Warner's explanation for this emphasis is. I would be interested to know how he would characterize and account for the political priorities of leading members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. And I would like to benefit from his analysis of how those priorities fit into the philosophical debate about which he writes so passionately.

Instead, Warner chooses to place the controversy surrounding the place of abortion on the church's agenda outside the parameters of his work. Indeed, he writes as though abortion has not been a major focus of the bishops' attention recently. His index of names, for example, includes thirteen references for the Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, the staff member at the United States Catholic Conference widely credited with (blamed for?) drafting the pastoral letters on peace and on the U.S. economy. But that same index contains only a single entry for Cardinal John O'Connor, the outspoken archbishop of New York, and there is none at all for the equally prominent Cardinal Law. This is, to put it bluntly, a strange ordering of priorities for a book purporting to be about Catholic bishops and public policy. But that ordering of priorities is exactly what allows Warner to refer to "the gradual withdrawal of the bishops from the forefront of the abortion controversy," and to assert that "the bishops and their advisors appear reluctant to fight the abortion battle unless forced to do so in the context of some other issue." These claims are readily contradicted by the facts of recent history. But they, and others like them, arise naturally out of the unfortunate, ideologically driven approach that mars this potentially valuable book. □

Timothy A. Byrnes *teaches political science at Colgate University and is the author of* Catholic Bishops in American Politics.

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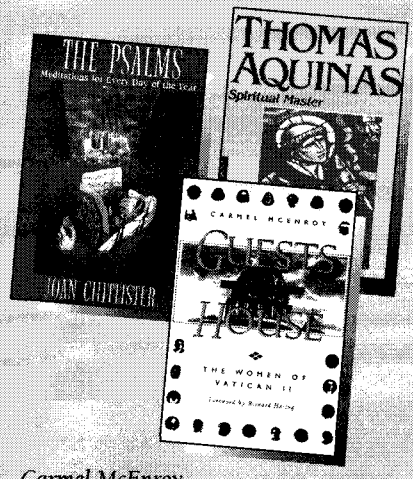

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THE ECUMENISM OF BEAUTY

Eastern Christian Worlds
Mahmound Zibawi
Translated by Madeleine Beaumont
The Liturgical Press, $99.95, 272 pp.

Rembert G. Weakland

Just as there is a renewed interest in our day in Gregorian chant, so there is also a re-assimilation of the icon into our religious sensibilities. In this latter case the fascination with the icon has led to modern imitations as well as newer creative extensions of the art to include contemporary and more popular saintly figures such as Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, and John Henry Newman. This interest in the icon is to be found among all churches and constitutes what the eminent historical scholar, Olivier Clément, in the preface to this work calls the "ecumenism of beauty." In fact, as the necessary, but more theoretical and official dialogues continue between East and West, the liturgical and artistic ecumenism continues at its own unauthorized pace.

With regard to icons we all have a knowledge, even if superficial, of the Byzantine tradition. We have also become well-acquainted with the iconography of other groups that were associated with Byzantium throughout history. For example, we admire especially the Russian Orthodox tradition. Reproductions of the great Greek icons as well as their Russian counterparts have become commonplace now in the West. Because of its countless reproductions, most people now recognize the icon of the Trinity and the Eucharist—perhaps the most famous icon in the world—picturing the three angels during their meal with Abraham, painted by André Rublëv about the year 1410 and now in the Historical Museum in Moscow.

But the icons of the other Orthodox churches—the Syrians, the Armenians, the Ethiopians, the Copts—are less well known. These pre-Chalcedonian, or Eastern Orthodox churches as we call them, also had their icons. For this reason Mahmoud Zibawi's study is most needed. Zibawi concentrates precisely on these Eastern Orthodox churches that went their own way after the Council of Chalcedon (451) and outlines their iconographic contribution.

The text is not an easy one to read since the style is often elliptic, passing from historical to aesthetic comments in the same paragraph and presupposing more knowledge than the average, even educated, reader might possess about the early Christological controversies and the councils of the fifth century. On the other hand, the bibliography is more than adequate for those who wish for further clarification, and, most important, many examples of the icons discussed are beautifully reproduced in colored plates. Sadly, however, the physical deterioration of so many of the best pieces is also evident.

Zibawi does not end his discussion with the late Middle Ages, as many such books on the icon do, but continues his story in many cases into the last century. This scope makes the book somewhat uneven in depth, but even the later examples he produces are of interest. The author is correct in his assertion that we cannot understand another church without understanding its full tradition, not just its theological formulas. The icon becomes a way of telling another story, especially about how the divine and the human are to meet. Since this was at the heart of the Christological struggles of the fourth century, the icons become more than just pictures to pray in front of; they were expressions of dogma. They are doctrine in art. They are theology in visible form. The search for the transcendent finds its expression in the icon, just as it does in the liturgy itself.

The West has often been enticed by the beauty of icons, by their otherworldly quality, their transparency and incandescence. Still, we must ask what it is that the painter is trying to portray. This leads to the whole question of divinization and the relationship between the human and the divine. Icons in the Eastern Orthodox tradition maintain a likeness to the person depicted but do so under very stringent norms, lest they fail in their portrayal of the human participation in divine life. The icon is thus not an end but a means toward a deeper Christological and anthropological understanding.

As in the Byzantine tradition, the pre-Chalcedonians did not permit three-dimensional art. Although a few early reliefs on buildings, doors, and the like can still be found, the three-dimensional portrayal is too graphic for the spiritualization sought by the religious artist. Zibawi quotes Hypatios of Ephesus (sixth century) to explain this position: "We accept that veneration be shown to images traced on wood and stone but not to sculptured images." Even this adage was highly controverted, as was evident during the iconoclastic controversies. It can also be taken for granted with the pre-Chalcedonian churches that during the iconoclastic controversies a goodly number

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of fine pieces from the early centuries, that is, created before the Council of Nicaea II in 787, were destroyed.

One of the benefits of studying the art marvelously reproduced in this book is in tracing the various currents that influenced iconic style. As one would expect, the Byzantine influence is pervasive. But the Arabic contribution is also clear, both in the decorative surroundings—the framework of the pieces—as well as in the ornaments. The crossover between secular and sacred patterns is less discernible than in the purely Byzantine models. We must remember that Islam opposed human figures in art and excelled more in decorative textures.

A quick glance through the book will convince any reader that the faces depicted are not the usual Greek and Russian profiles. These icons depict a more diversified church and a more universal one. *Eastern Christian Worlds* is thus not just a fine contribution to the broader history of the icon but shows the art of a vast and believing segment of the church, a communion too frequently neglected, if not forgotten, in the West. □

Rembert G. Weakland, *O.S.B., is the archbishop of Milwaukee.*

ELITIST CYBERBABBLE

The Electronic Republic
Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age
Lawrence Grossman
Viking, $24.95, 290 pp.

What Comes Next
The End of Big Government and the New Paradigm Ahead
James P. Pinkerton
Hyperion, $24.95, 404 pp.

Eugene McCarraher

You say you want a revolution? Even though, at this writing, the much-heralded "Republican Revolution" appears to have stalled, the GOP has engineered a remarkable transformation in the nation's political culture. When even the Democratic president announces that "the era of big government is over," one can be sure that we have bid *adieu* to the New Deal *ancien régime*. The more visionary Republicans are promising a brave new democratic world of communications technologies. Democracy by talk-radio and electronic bulletin board spells the end of bureaucratic government benevolence, so the theory states. A visionary discourse of technological democracy and *laissez-faire* capitalism describes the future.

This emerging political culture perplexes Lawrence Grossman, a former president of both NBC News and PBS as well as the current president of Horizons Cable Network. Convinced that calls for term limits, lower taxes, and balanced budgets constitute a revival of "populism," Grossman argues in *The Electronic Republic* that the new technologies give the people "a seat of their own at the table of political power." With our fax machines and on-line services, we will make our laws as easily and directly as we order silverware from QVC.

Given the fact that two-thirds of eligible voters did not vote in the last congressional election, "populism" is probably a misnomer. Populism has always been an elastic term, encompassing farmers fighting the railroads and suburbanites imploring billionaires like Ross Perot to buy their government. Thus, contrary to Grossman, Kevin Phillips, and other acolytes of the folk, "populism" is not necessarily anti-elitist: Rush Limbaugh's bellowing sounds siren-sweet to corporate ears, while Perot (a representative populist in Gross-

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man's view) embodies the technocrat as tribune.

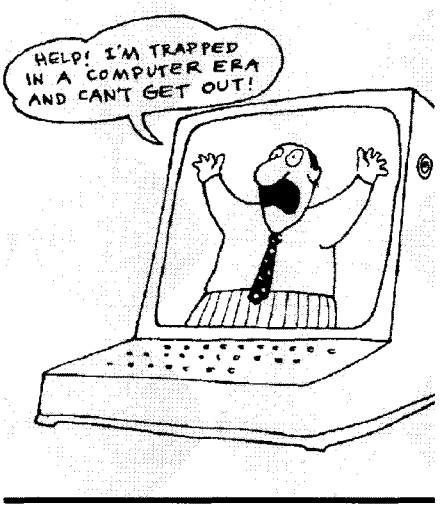
Besides, Grossman himself reminds us that the mainstream media "are an integral part of the national and international corporate community." Since these same malefactors are already absorbing the latest technological advances, Grossman fears that "the information superhighway will not be a freeway but an automated private road." Yet his antidote for corporate power includes little more than antitrust enforcement, a public telecommunications trust fund, and the old liberal bromide of education—none of which seems feasible or attractive in the current political climate.

Grossman's book signals the demise of the gray-flanneled liberalism that reigned among many corporate cultural professionals for a generation after World War II, and compelled the nation to confront poverty, racism, and military madness. By contrast, in *What Comes Next* James P. Pinkerton exemplifies the new species in American political culture: the rock 'n' roll Republican. Pinkerton urges us to plunge into what Newt Gingrich, Alvin Toffler, and other futurists have called the Third Wave economy of information and services. A former assistant in the Bush administration, Pinkerton is jokey where Grossman is earnest: he likens Bush to Prufrock, "walking on the beach, pondering his peach—till the voters woke him, and he drowned." Sometimes, his hypocrisy gets the better of him, as when he laments that Bush "dissed vision." He shows symptoms of technobabble, classifying historical periods in the terms of computer programs: "BUREAUCRAT," "AMERICRAT," *ad nauseam*.

Still, Pinkerton seems a user-friendly member of the Republican intelligensia. He recoils from racism and homophobia, and deftly maps the fissures in the Republican landscape, charting both the fault line between "culturalists" (Pat Robertson) and "economists" (Jack Kemp) and the generational crevice between "regulars" (Bob Dole) and "movement" types (Gingrich).

Alarmed by the nation's widening class and racial divisions, Pinkerton imagines a bleak "Cyber future" straight out of William Gibson's "cyberpunk" fictional blend of high technology, corporate conspiracy, and paranoia. Jobs will become automated out of existence, capital will slosh across national boundaries and global financial markets, and the privileged will retreat from public services into a commodified and quasi-feudalized realm of education, transportation, and communication. Americans, Pinkerton warns, will be subjected to a marketplace whose vectors they will neither see nor understand.

To combat this, Pinkerton proposes a "New Paradigm" of government to replace New Deal-Great Society liberalism. Yet his "new" paradigm bears an uncanny resemblance to Goldwater Republicanism. Bad: the "government-political complex" and the twin horrors of "rote redistributing" and "ministerial mandating" (the creeping socialism argument, easily refuted by a glance at the distribution of wealth). Good: "privatization" (though the erosion of public services and spirit figure prominently in the cyberpunk dystopias) and "federalism" (relying on the wisdom of the states and localities). How the growing number of part-time, low-wage workers will pay their way in this Privatopia, Pinkerton never tells us.



Indeed, like his Third Wave cohorts, Pinkerton is better at demonizing government than at understanding its relationship to the economy after World War II. For instance, one of the significant elements in the New Deal-cold war order was the military-industrial complex—a central component of the post-Depression political economy about which Pinkerton has nothing to say. It seems much easier to whine about high taxes and demoralizing welfare checks than to question the Pentagon's ravenous appetite for the public treasury.

Moreover, Pinkerton distorts the changing face of corporate capitalism. "Postmodern capitalism," he argues, has democratized the corporation; businesses now desire the "maximum feasible participation" of their employees. Really? The vaunted "democracy" of postindustrial business is nothing more than the newest fad in managerial ideology. Modern capitalism features, among other delights, temporary employment, automated production technology, and the globalization of markets in labor and capital. Its premium on "flexibility" in technology and skill means greater instability for workers and greater power for the professional-managerial class. Pinkerton's own paper, *New York Newsday*, expired from the pressures exerted by just these forces.

So in one crucial respect Pinkerton does articulate a "new paradigm." Every buzzword usually considered the rhetorical property of the politically correct—choice, diversity, empowerment, decentralization—makes a cameo appearance. But in Pinkerton's manifesto, as well as in the discourse of Republican freshmen and countless business gurus, they serve as Newspeak for an aggressively accumulative and culturally libertarian generation of managers and professionals. A New Left language of radical democracy has become part of a vocabulary of postindustrial elites who yoke the desire for freedom to the authority of experts and the unpredictable coercions of the marketplace. Welcome to the free-wheeling callousness of Corporate Hip. □

Eugene McCarraher *teaches humanities at Villanova University.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

On New Year's Day in 1994 the Zapatistas mounted an armed rebellion in the Southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Their grievances derived from a long history of federal neglect; the historic contempt for the region's largely non-Spanish-speaking indigenous population; the social consequences of NAFTA; the ruthless exploitation of the natural resources of Chiapas for the enrichment of the few; and the dry rot of Mexican politicians and the judiciary.

The dispute between the Chiapas revolutionaries and the Mexican government was eventually mediated by the local bishop, a Rome-trained Scripture scholar, Don Samuel Ruiz. Ruiz, in fact, is at the center of this book by the highly respected commentator on matters Central and Latin American, Gary MacEoin. What this journalist has to say is of intrinsic interest to anyone who would like to get a fix on the social and political realities of that part of the world.

The People's Church: Bishop Samuel Ruiz and Why He Matters
by Gary MacEoin
Crossroad, $16.95, 174 pp.

As a theologian I was particularly intrigued by MacEoin's well-told story of how Don Ruiz, inspired by the reforms of Vatican II and the Latin American liberation theologians, had devoted his entire episcopal life to the service of the natives of Chiapas, who among them spoke five Mayan languages. Ruiz's vision of a church being built from the ground up has come into conflict with the restorationist winds blowing from Rome. Those restorationist impulses were given much intensity through the apostolic delegate in Mexico who, as MacEoin describes him, is not a nice person (to put it generously).

The larger issue that MacEoin's quite informative work raises, of course, is the health of liberation theology. The pope has recently pronounced it a passing phase which is now dying. My own instinct is to say that, however useful it may or may not be in any given social setting, its angle of vision, its way of reading the Bible, its focus on experience, has impacted theology in a fundamental way. In that sense, at least, it is far from dead. On the contrary, liberation theology has entered into, and gives sustenance to, all theology. More importantly, the insights of liberation theology are crucial for the process of inculturation. Bishop Ruiz understands that with clarity. He is also undoubtedly inspired by a man who was his predecessor as bishop of San Cristobal in Chiapas: Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566), the great protector of the native peoples of the Americas.

The papers collected by William Cenkner, first delivered at The Catholic University of America in 1993, are very much concerned with inculturation. A gathering of theologians focused its attention on the fact of the American church's increasing ethnic, linguistic, and racial diversity. Such diversity has been a hallmark of American Catholicism but the new "minorities" are, in fact, becoming visible majorities.

The theologians represented in these pages write both from the perspective of such minority churches (for example, Shawn Copeland on the African-American church and Orlando Espin from the Hispanic) and, more urgently, about the issues raised by such diverse communities.The late Pope Paul VI (in *Evangelii nuntiandi*) said that the problem of gospel and culture is the "drama of our age." Each of the essayists is acutely aware of that problem. The question of the meaning of culture runs like a *basso continuo* through these pages. Furthermore, the very diversity of these communities (when we speak of the "black church" do we mean African-American? West Indian? Haitian?) demands extended reflection on the local church and its relationship to the Great Church and vice versa; the issue of local autonomy and the temptation to sectarianism; and the overarching problem of how the gospel finds a local home and a habitation.

The Multicultural Church
edited by William Cenkner, O.P.
Paulist, $14.95., 202 pp.

All of these questions get taken up in one form or another. One theme that seems particularly pertinent is the need to understand catholicity not as a

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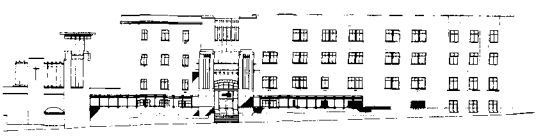

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sociological description or as a reified "mark" of the church but as a spiritual aspiration. Joseph Komonchak rightly highlights the renewed interest of understanding catholicity as "unity in diversity," and Roberto Gouizeta warns his fellow Hispanic theologians not to romanticize any bucolic retrospective vision of a simple Hispanic faith of popular religion; a warning not dissimilar to one raised by Orlando Espin in this volume.

What the participants really desire is what the Taiwanese theologian Choan-Seng Song calls, borrowing from the Buddhist lexicon, "third-eye theology," that is, that inner vision which permits us to see what has hitherto been hidden because of our own ignorance. It is precisely the merit of some of these writers to help us focus our "third eye" and allow us, however dimly, to see what the gospel looks like when it is seen and experienced by the Other.

Cenkner, in the introduction, announces that this is a first step into what he hopes will be a continuing conversation and an ongoing study. As these stimulating essays make clear, this is a worthwhile path to take. David Power, in a wonderful phrase in his essay, says that we have already experienced in theology the "turn to the subject." What Power warns against is the "loss of the subject." It is part of the project of these writers to see that the subjects of our many communities do not, in fact, become lost to a church which wishes to be truly catholic.

Veling is not interested primarily in the diverse ecclesial communities discussed in Cenkner's volume. In his opening pages Veling distinguishes between small groups (for example, Bible study circles, prayer meetings, etc. in parishes) and marginal communities which maintain a "critical distance from mainline churches (feminist groups; house churches, etc.). Among these marginal groups would be the base communities described by MacEoin but not the ethnic-based church communities which are the focus of Cenkner's volume.

In his concluding reflection, the author asserts that intentional communities maintain an educational and hermeneutical preference for openness, generativity, being on the way, and so on. More precisely, he demonstrates that such groups live in tension and dialogue with the larger tradition in a prophetic and critical manner. Hermeneutical theory is employed to demonstrate this.

Nevertheless, at one level the topic of intentional communities is largely submerged under a long discussion of hermeneutical theory. Veling's desire is to mediate between H. G. Gadamer's notion that hermeneutics should hold us

Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation
by Terry A. Veling
Crossroad, $19.95, 244 pp.

somehow within the bonds of tradition and the critique of Habermas and company which is far more suspicious of an inherited tradition. In the argument laid out by Veling, one learns (or relearns) a good deal about contemporary critical debates but, alas, very little in the concrete about intentional communities. Veling never draws on empirical examples of specific communities like those studied by the Princeton sociologist of religion, Robert Wuthnow. As a consequence, intentional communities in this book exist only as a Weberian "ideal type."

The abstract quality of this work is a pity since, at least for the Catholic tradition, intentional communities have been a hallmark of its catholicity, and historico-social contextualization would have added weight to the argument. One could argue, for example, that the founding of both religious orders and "schools" of spirituality are, and continue to be, historical analogues (at least in their origins) to intentional communities and, further, that in many cases they existed in tension with the mainstream church as a prophetic, educational, and hermeneutical force. One might benefit, to cite an instance, on seeing liberation theology not as a theoretical construct but as a school of spirituality. Gustavo Gutierrez has done this in his seminal work, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1983).

I did learn a good deal from this book, especially from the discussion of the poet Edmond Jabes as well as from the author's capacity to find the *mot juste* (I like his observation that such groups can be thought of as "scribbling on the margins of tradition"). Furthermore, Veling's book can teach a good deal of hermeneutical theory. Its weakness, however, rests in the unremitting focus on methodology. One is reminded of Karl Rahner's observation about theoreticians of methodology: they are always sharpening the knife but they rarely cut the roast.

No contemporary theologian has more assiduously sharpened the methodological knife than the University of Chicago's David Tracy. In this collection of recent essays, however, Tracy says that modern theology has become obsessed with the "right method" and, while this obsession has yielded its own insights, there now comes a time when theology must move from the framework of *logos* to the central issue, which is *Theos*.

On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church
by David Tracy
Orbis, $16.95, 146 pp.

Indeed, as a number of his essays attest, it is the question of God in contemporary culture which is at the center of Tracy's current reflections. Indeed, not a few of these pieces could be seen as preliminary skirmishes for the major work which he has now undertaken.

It would be premature to say how Tracy intends to proceed, but certain things seem obvious. Good Catholic theologian that he is, he wishes both to retrieve the tradition and take account of the situation in which we now find ourselves. It is not simply a matter of proclaiming the truth in some Barthian fashion (although Tracy acknowledges the neoconservative demand for attention to tradition, authority, and continuity), nor of submitting to the critical acids of modernity. Tracy argues that in a pluralist, post-Holocaust, world it is the apophatic and prophetic impulses of our present condition that offer us the largest opportunity to rediscover God,

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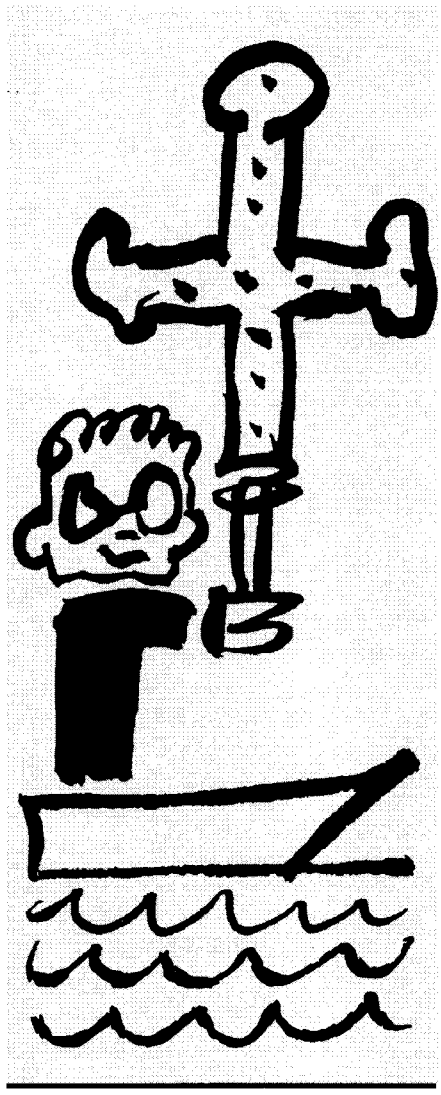
"not as an 'ism' but as an awesome, often terrifying hope against hope." It is for these reasons, that Tracy postulates a need for a closer correlation between theology and spirituality (something already well begun by Gustavo Gutierrez) as well as a willingness to keep alive the "dangerous memory" of Jesus (J.B. Metz). It should not surprise those who have followed his work that Tracy sees God as essentially relational and, indeed, Trinitarian.

The "God essays" in this book were of most interest to me. But what Tracy has to say about how he views Catholicism in relation to the ecumenical enterprise is also quite valuable, as are his reflections on the universality of the Christian message (he makes the wonderful point that particularity does not erase universality; using, as an example, the particular day of Bloom in order to create a universal mythos in Joyce's *Ulysses*) and his observations about the plurality of readers and the need for a shared vision when reading the Bible.

In short: These essays provide us with brief entry into the thinking of a major Catholic theological voice and make us impatient for the major theological work which he has promised.

The essays in Kaplan's volume are very uneven contributions made at a conference held nearly ten years ago at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The focus was on how Christian missions were received from the perspective of indigenous people. As various of these essays demonstrate, not only did the missionaries have to accommodate their message to diverse kinds of milieu but, in some instances, the native culture also might restructure itself to meet the missionary challenge. Tamil-speaking Hindus responded in this way to largely Protestant evangelization. Other scenarios include the indigenization of the Christian message in those countries, such as Buddhist Thailand, that had a highly developed theology and praxis.

Indigenous Responses To Western Christianity
edited by Steven Kaplan
New York University Press, $40, 183 pp.



These and similar case studies (for example, of Pentecostal Christians in China or of messianic movements of Indians in nineteenth-century Mexico) make up the bulk of this book. The case studies are prefaced, however, by the editor's methodological essay setting out a menu of possible responses when missionary Christianity meets an unchristianized culture. These Christian responses ranged from mere (and grudging) toleration of the indigenous mores of the culture to a complete incorporation of the culture into the Christian life. This particular essay and the one following do sharpen up less precise descriptions of inculturation found in some Catholic literature.

I did pronounce this volume "uneven." First of all, the essays were written mainly by social scientists and historians who have read very little in the massive theological and missiological literature that has dealt with these issues. It also strikes me that save for the essays dealing with Latin America and Mexico, Catholics are more or less offstage and when they do appear some of the authors exhibit little knowledge of Catholicism, as well as a tin ear for Catholic praxis. My favorite example is the observation that the Thai sign of respect has substituted in Catholic churches "for the traditional Catholic curtsy."

All may genuflect now.

The methodological remarks may well interest the missiologist and/or theologian and the other essays are valuable as limited explorations of the topic at hand. Some light is shed on a few of the studies reviewed above as well. But given its price, this is probably a book best borrowed from the library. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology and chairs the department at the University of Notre Dame.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

the examination of earlier editions as "a model of cooperative ecclesial concern" and had taken pains to insist that the committee's 1985 statement could not be used "to call into question [my] authentic Catholic faith or orthodoxy."

Although there were also adversarial and unsatisfactory aspects to that process, the atmosphere by the end was, for the most part, mutually respecful and even friendly. I could not, of course, describe the recent non-process in that fashion.

You are right: I am perfectly capable of speaking for myself. But it is good to have some support as well. I appreciate *Commonweal*'s.

REV. RICHARD P. McBRIEN
Notre Dame, Ind.

Between potency & act

Heather King's "One Woman's Journey" [May 3] is an excellently expressed, painstaking confession about abortion, but it does repeat the mistake of most defenders of abortion when it describes the act as the destruction of a "potential human life." If a fetus is only *potentially* human, what is it *actually*? Zoologically, biologically, genetically, taxonomically, the fetus from its inception is human. And there ain't no mister-in-between. In science, facts speak for themselves.

WILLIAM TALBOT
New York, N.Y.

Dawson lives

Commonweal readers may be interested to know that the legacy of Catholic historian Christopher Dawson's innovative ideas about the need to study Western culture through an interdisciplinary focus on its Christian roots [April 5] still bears fruit in at least one American college.

Here at Saint Mary's, Prof. Bruno P. Schlesinger, inspired by Dawson's insight, founded the Humanistic Studies Program (formerly called Christian Culture) forty years ago, and it has been going strong ever since. Our two-year major takes students through a close interdisciplinary study of Western history, literature, art, theology, and philosophy, and strives for the kind of cultural synthesis that can correct Dawson's perception of the average undergraduate curriculum as a "sprawling collection of unrelated units."

JOHN SHINNERS
Notre Dame, Ind.

The writer is chair of the Saint Mary's program he describes.

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YOU BECOME WHAT YOU WEAR

Kathleen Carlin

A standard criticism of sociological research projects is that they go to great lengths to prove what most people with common sense already know. Without exactly taking sides for or against that criticism, I want to describe a sociological exercise that might seem to validate it—except that, for me and a classmate (and maybe for some who read this account), the experience made a truism come alive.

What we did: During spring break from a local college, my friend and I went downtown to shop. First, however, we made ourselves virtually unrecognizable to our friends and even to our families. We wore clothing slightly inappropriate for the weather, clean but wrinkled, clearly out of sync with the styles worn by most visitors to the area. We carried plastic bags of nameless possessions. Both of us were slightly unkempt. My friend wore a faded flannel shirt and T-shirt, a wrinkled skirt over sweat pants. I wore a wool hat that concealed my hair, an unfashionable coat and scarf, and glasses with clip-on sun shades.

The aim was to look like street people, and to observe what difference that made in the way other people responded to us; whether the appearance of poverty would place stigma on us. We were also prepared to act out some mildly unusual behaviors that might speak of some emotional disabilities, without appearing seriously disturbed or dangerous. As it turned out, there was no need for histrionics; people turned us off or tuned us out on the basis of appearance alone.

Our first stop (after parking our cars near the railroad tracks) was in the bargain store of a local charity, where we politely asked access to a bathroom, and were refused. Next we entered the lobby of a large hotel, where we asked for a coffee shop and a bathroom. The bellhop said, "You must go to the twentieth floor." We weren't up to trying our gig at an exclusive restaurant, so we wandered around the first floor and left. From there we went to a pawnshop, where we more or less blended with the patrons, and then on to the upperscale stores and coffee shops during the lunch hour.

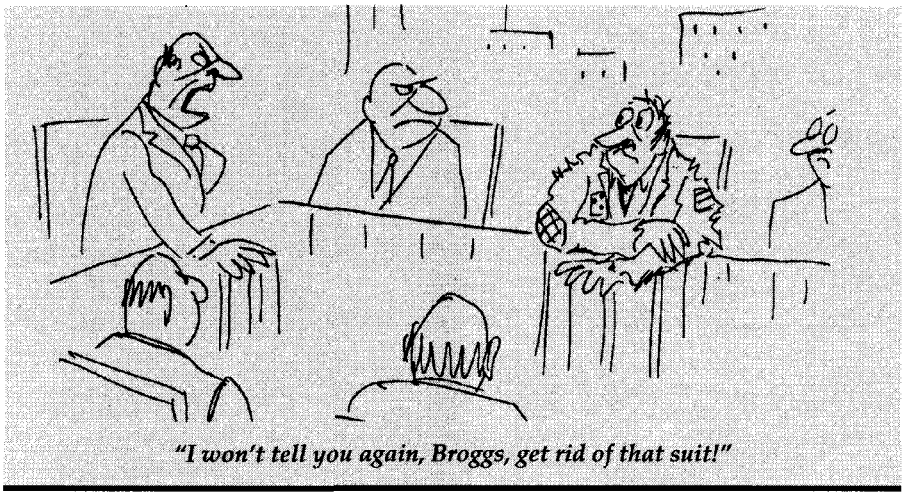
It was stigma time. Some of the children we encountered stared, pointed, and laughed; adults gave us long, incredulous looks. Clerks in stores followed us around to watch our every move. In a lunchroom a second assistant hurried to the side of the cashier, where they took my $2 check without asking for an ID; it seemed worth that price to have us out the door. At one doorway a clerk physically blocked the entrance, apparently to discourage our entry.

We had money to cover small purchases, and, apart from wearing downscale clothing, we did nothing in any of these settings to draw attention to ourselves; we merely shopped quietly in our accustomed manner. At one establishment we did blow our cover when we ordered croissants with a latté and an espresso; that may have been too far out of character for "bag ladies." Elsewhere we encountered derision, mockery, distrust, and rude stares.

So what did we learn? Mostly what we expected, what everybody knows: People judge by appearances. Just looking poor brings with it a stigma, accompanied by the withdrawal of much of the social civility most of us take for granted. Lacking the culturally acceptable symbols of belonging in this milieu, we became, to a degree, "objects," with less inherent dignity as persons.

There was, however, one surprise; more accurately, a shock. It came clear most strongly at the shop I mentioned earlier, the one where a clerk conspicuously positioned herself in the entryway on seeing us. I had just noticed the place and had turned to my companion, saying, "I've never seen this store. Let's go in." She looked at me with dismay: "You're not really going in there, are you?"

I knew what she meant and shared her feeling. The place felt out of bounds for us. In a very few hours, we found ourselves accepting and internalizing the superficial and biased judgments of ourselves that prevailed among the people we met; we stigmatized ourselves. It's a good lesson to learn, maybe especially for sociologists. □



"I won't tell you again, Broggs, get rid of that suit!"

Kathleen Carlin *is a "nontraditional" graduate student with a special interest in social issues. She lives in Billings, Montana.*

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